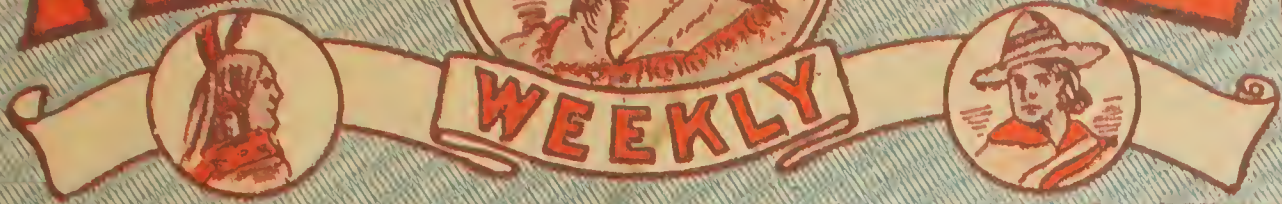


WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S OVERLAND ROUTE. OR, THE MASKED BAND OF DEATH PASS.

By AN OLD SCOUT.
AND OTHER STORIES



"What is the matter with you fellows?" asked Young Wild West, smiling as the leader of the Masked Band pointed at him warningly. "You don't think we are afraid of you, do you?" "Death!" hissed the men ominously.

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

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Young Wild West's Overland Route

—OR—

THE MASKED BAND OF DEATH PASS

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE MASKED BAND.

It was a stormy night on the mountains. The rain had been falling steadily all day, and when the shades of darkness gathered it increased, instead of diminishing, while a stiff wind came up which caused the tall pines to bend and creak with a ghostly sound.

It was a night that one would not desire to be out in, even if the surroundings were anything like pleasant, but upon the mountain range at the border line of Colorado and Utah it was such a wild and lonesome spot in the sunlight that on a stormy night it was one of the last places on earth where a lone traveller would be expected to be found.

Yet on the night of which we write, a solitary horseman was riding slowly along the crooked trail that ran up the mountain.

The man was of medium height and was clothed in a waterproof coat and hat, with high boots.

He rode a fine black horse, which, though somewhat jaded, still possessed plenty of fire, and at the least command would start forward at a faster gait.

"On, Blackbird! We will soon be at Death Pass, and then in a very few minutes we will both be in dry quarters. Step up a little, now! The road is pretty level here."

As the rider spoke the words, the horse responded, and went along at a sharp canter.

Five minutes later the lone horseman slowed down to a walk.

Ahead of him was a black wall of impenetrable darkness.

"We are at the cliff," he muttered, half to himself and half to the fine specimen of horseflesh he rode. "Now for the pass. The boys are expecting me, so I wonder if any of them will be here to meet me."

He strove to pierce the darkness, but being unable to do so, slackened the rein and allowed his horse to go ahead.

It is a known fact that a horse can see to a certain extent in the dark.

This one did, for it turned slightly to the right and entered a mountain path that started right through the cliff.

The lone rider gave a sigh of relief, and then allowing the steed to pick its own way, he sat in the saddle, his head bent down to shield him from the driving rain, which was right in his face.

On rode the man, his horse on a walk, for five minutes or more.

Then he came to a halt and listened for a full minute.

But nothing but the howl of the storm could be heard.

Then he pushed forward again and proceeded along slowly for perhaps a mile.

"I must be near the end of the pass by this time," he muttered. "Too stormy for the boys to come out and meet me, I suppose. Well, I don't blame them very much. It is not fit for a dog to be out, much less the captain of the Masked Band of Death Pass!"

A chuckle came from him as he said this, and then he urged his steed into a sharp trot.

Two minutes later he was able to see a couple of horse lengths ahead of him. He had passed through the pass.

That the horse had been that way before was evident, for it suddenly turned sharply to the left, and the overhanging boughs of the trees that were there swept over the rider and caused him to bend low to the animal's neck.

The heavy rain had caused the boughs to bend lower than they were usually.

Just as the horseman got to a small open spot he stopped his horse and uttered a whistle that could just be heard above the roaring of the wind and rain.

There was an interval of perhaps three seconds and then the whistle was answered.

With a muttered exclamation of satisfaction, the horseman rode forward.

The next instant footsteps were heard approaching and stood before a big rock that must have weighed twenty tons or more.

Then from behind this a man stepped.

"Who comes?" was the question that was asked.

"Number One," retorted the horseman, as he shook the water from his hat.

"The watchword?"

"Death!"

"Enter."

Leading his horse by the bridle rein, the rain-soaked rider passed around the big rock, the other man leading the way.

Into the mouth of a cave they went, and then the fellow who had challenged the newcomer stamped his foot on the ground twice.

The next instant footsteps were heard approaching and a light flashed upon the scene.

"It is all right, boys!" said the horseman. "I got here, in spite of the storm. Just take care of my horse, one of you, and see to it that he gets a good rubbing down. Twenty miles through a storm like this is no pleasant pilgrimage."

"I should say not, captain," retorted a man with a lantern in his hand. "Step back an' git a good drink of somethin' hot. I'll take care of Blackbird."

"All right."

The cave was irregular in shape, and as the captain, as he was called, stepped around an angle he walked into a very roomy part of it, which was lighted at the furthest end by three or four lanterns.

There were stools, chairs, tables, boxes and bales scat-

tered about in that portion of the underground place and, in spite of the rather mixed-up appearance, there was something snug and homelike about it.

In one corner was an old-fashioned cooking stove and two packing boxes, one on top of the other near it, rising to his of cupboard.

"Welcome to Captain Dark!" said one of the dozen men who were gathered in the underground abode, rising to his feet and saluting in military style.

Then all of them arose and made a similar salute.

The captain nodded, and then he removed his rubber raincoat and hat.

He had scarcely done this when a Chinaman appeared from a dark corner with his arms full of clothing.

"Captain Dark puttee dry clothes on!" he exclaimed in a high cracked voice.

"All right, Pig Eye. You are very thoughtful, I must say. Just give me a little help and I will soon feel like a new man."

While the Celestial was helping Captain Dark to undress, one of the men hastened to make a bowl of punch.

He soon had the decoction brewed to his satisfaction and then he brought a steaming bumper to the captain.

This was sipped with a great deal of satisfaction, and when the bowl was empty the leader of the band helped the Chinaman to finish making his toilet.

While this was being done the same man who had brewed the punch was hustling about to get a meal ready.

He broiled a venison steak and pulled some baked potatoes from the oven of the stove and placed them on a small table, along with some meal cakes, butter and a jar of pickles.

Then he poured out a cup of coffee and announced that the captain's supper was ready for him.

"Good!" was the reply. "I guess I am about as hungry as I ever was in my life. I will make short work of the grub you have made ready for me, Julius."

He sat down and proved to be as good as his word.

When he had eaten to his fill he swung himself around in his chair and took the cigar the Chinaman brought him and calmly lighted it.

"Well, boys, what is new since I went away the day before yesterday?" he asked.

"Well, there ain't been any stagecoach along since the holdup the night before you went away, Cap," answered one of them.

"No, the owners of the overland route got chicken-hearted, I guess. But there will be a stagecoach along to-morrow, I am quite certain."

"A new line started, Cap?"

"Yes, a young fellow—nothing more than boy, too—has declared that he will have an overland route from Stony Flats to Buckhorn Bar. He is going to drive the outfit himself the first day, and he has made a wager that he will get his passengers and baggage and mail through without being robbed."

The band of road agents, for such they were, grew very much interested when they heard this.

"Who did he make the bet with?" asked one, who was evidently the captain's right hand man.

"With the proprietor of the supply store over in Stony Flats."

"An' you heard about it?"

"I was right there when the wager was made."

"Oh!"

"But I didn't have a word to say."

"I s'pose it was best not to mix up in it."

"Certainly. When I am in Stony Flats or Buckhorn Bar I am Dan Duncan, the prospector and gentlemanly gambler. When I am here and on the road with my mask and rig on I am Captain Dark, the leader of the Masked Band of Death Pass. Now there is just this much about it. Young Wild West or anybody else can't lay out a route from Stony Flats to Buckhorn Bar without coming through Death Pass. That means that we will be in luck. We are strong enough to fight off all the men they send after us, and our retreat is such a snug one that it won't be found in the next twenty years, unless some one of our band should prove to be a traitor."

"That'll never be!" cried one of the villains.

"You bet it won't!" chimed in another, and then they all declared their loyalty.

"Boys, I believe you. Suppose we all put on our rigs and swear over again that we will always be loyal!"

"Good!"

"Certainly."

"You bet!"

"Sure!"

These and similar replies came to the captain's ears, not one failing to make a favorable answer.

"Very well, then," he said, rising from his chair. "Pig Eye, fetch my fancy costume here."

The Celestial hastened to obey, while the men went to where they kept their things and got out the disguises they wore when they were out on business, as they termed it.

In less than five minutes the twelve or fourteen men in the cave had changed their appearance wonderfully.

Short capes were fastened over their shoulders and skull-caps with long, straight black hair hanging to them were on their heads.

But the most striking part of the disguise were the masks they had over their faces.

They were made of wood and resembled a human skull almost to perfection.

In that dimly lighted cave they made a weird, not to say terrible appearance.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Captain Dark, as he surveyed the hideous looking crowd around him. "Hold up your right hands, boys!"

Up went their hands in quick response to the command.

"Nod, repeat after me: We do swear by all that is good and by all that is bad that we will never disclose the least information concerning our band to an outsider, no matter if we will suffer death by not doing so the very next minute, and should we ever fail to stick to this obligation, may we die in our tracks!"

The masked band repeated this in unison and when they were through, Captain Dark made a motion for them to drop their hands.

"One of you go out and take the place of the man on guard, so he can take the obligation once more," he said.

A man hastened to do his bidding, and soon the guard was rigged out in his ghastly disguise.

He took the oath, after which the leader ordered drinks to be served to all hands.

They had plenty of supplies in the cave, among which were quantities of liquor, both in bottles and kegs.

They drank to the success of their band and confusion to their enemies, and then the captain led them in a rollicking drinking song.

The Masked Band of Death Pass surely thought they were invincible, but they were soon to learn that it was not all plain sailing ahead of them.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOLD-UP.

"I am glad I sold the route to you, Young Wild West, but I must say that I feel sorry for you. I'm dead sure that's you can't make a success of running the stagecoach to Buckhorn Bar, because the road agents won't let you. If the government don't take a hand pretty soon it won't be safe to travel over there, at all. But the Overland Route is yours now, and I wish you good luck."

"That is all right, Mr. Jefferson. I know about how you feel in the matter. You would not have sold out to me for such a ridiculous low figure if you thought you could keep up the route. But I assure you I will run the stagecoach on time from Stony Flats to Buckhorn. I don't say I won't be held up, but I do say that I will land my passengers and the mail all right. If the Masked Band of Death Pass, as they call it, hold me up they will find that they have run against a bad proposition. I am used to fighting road agents, and I don't imagine that there is a gang of rascals in the West that can stop me when I once start out."

The speakers were a stout man with a beard and attired in a suit of corduroy, and a handsome boy of less than twenty-one years of age.

They were standing in front of the shanty postoffice in the lively little mining camp of Stony Flats and probably a score of listeners stood about.

Jack Jefferson had certainly sold the Overland Route and all that belonged to it very cheap to Young Wild West, the champion deadshot of the West and wealthy young mine owner.

The way it happened was that Young Wild West and his two partners and inseparable companions, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, chanced to come along just after a holdup

had taken place at the mouth of Dead Pass and the owner of the route had suffered a severe loss.

It was the second time in a month that such a thing had happened, and as no clue could be obtained to the robbers, Jefferson had decided to give up the business and go into something more profitable.

Young Wild West was one of the most daring and courageous boys in the whole wild West at the time of which we write.

He had no equal when it came to shooting or riding, and his coolness and judgment could not be excelled.

He was as strong as a young lion and as supple and quick as a panther.

On the day upon which we find him in front of the post-office in the mining camp of Stony Flats, he was attired in a buckskin hunting suit that was unquestionably new, with a broad-brimmed pearl colored sombrero tipped back rakishly on his head.

The belt about the waist contained a brace of six-shooters and a hunting knife.

A wealth of chestnut hair hung over his shoulders, and this set off his handsome face to the best possible advantage.

Cheyenne Charlie was probably ten years our hero's senior. He was six feet tall, as straight as an arrow and wore his black hair and sported a heavy mustache of the same color.

He was a man who had done much service for the government as a scout and was a typical man of the wild West.

Jim Dart was a young fellow about the same age as Young Wild West. He had been born and reared in the West, but he did not let his hair grow long for some reason or other.

The two partners of the champion deadshot wore hunting suits similar to his and were armed in the same fashion.

They were making a trip through that portion of the country to look after some mining property they owned, and they had stopped at Stony Flats for a day or two to see how things were in that place.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were standing near Young Wild West while he was talking to Jack Jefferson and they both smiled when the man said he felt sorry for the purchaser of the overland route and outfit that went with it.

It was plainly evident to the rough looking men standing about that those three hardy Westerners were not much afraid of road agents.

"What time is the stagecoach scheduled to start from here, postmaster?" asked Wild, turning to a bald-headed man, who stood in the doorway of the shanty.

"Eight o'clock, sir," was the reply.

"And it is ten minutes to eight now," said the dashing young fellow, looking at his watch. "Well, if we expect to get to Buckhorn Bar on time we must leave on time. Is the mail ready?"

"Yes, sir. It has been ready the last ten minutes."

"Are there any passengers to go?"

"I reckon so."

"We will go," spoke up a man, as he came out of the office, followed by a young lady. "We had some idea of laying over in Stony Flats for a few days, but I have come to the conclusion that you are the one who can take us safely through. My name is Dick Wood, and I live at Buckhorn Bar, where I've got a good payin' claim. I don't mind lettin' you gents know that this young lady is my wife. I jest got married three days ago an' I'm takin' her to my home."

"Very well," retorted Young Wild West, taking off his hat and bowing to the couple. "I am of the opinion that I can get you home safe and sound. I gave it out yesterday afternoon when I bought the outfit that I was going to drive myself to-day. That is just what I am going to do, and I will guarantee the passengers I take that I will land them at Buckhorn Bar somewhere near schedule time. Ah! Here comes the outfit now!"

A rather rusty looking stagecoach rolled up with four horses hitched to it, and the driver swung around and brought it to a halt within ten feet of the postoffice door.

"All aboard, ladies and gentlemen!" cried Young Wild West. "Put your baggage on top, please. Postmaster, just hand out the mail."

The mail bags were handed over and then the dashing young fellow turned to his two partners and said:

"Boys, you can ride along a short distance behind and lead Spitfire along with you. You will act as the rear guard on the trip to Buckhorn Bar."

"Good enough," answered Cheyenne Charlie. "If ther road

agents tackle you I reckon ther measly coyotes will wish they hadn't afore we git through with 'em."

"You can bet on that!" added Jim Dart.

Spitfire was the name of the handsome sorrel stallion Young Wild West always rode when he went out on journeys from his home in Weston, Dakota.

It was just eight o'clock when our hero mounted the box and took the reins from the man he had hired as a driver.

The long-lashed whip cracked and off went the lumber-some vehicles.

Young Wild West's Overland Route was now in operation.

In addition to Mr. and Mrs. Dick Wood he had two miners for passengers.

All the men were armed, and declared that they were ready to give an account of themselves if the occasion demanded it.

The outfit was due at Buckhorn Bar at seven o'clock, so that gave them ten hours to make the fifty miles in, with an hour's rest at noon.

The road was a pretty smooth one, for a mountain trail, so the outfit went along at a good gait.

Everything went along swimmingly until they were within five miles of their destination.

Then they came to the place that was known as Death Pass.

The pass got its name from the fact that a band of emigrants had been attacked and massacred by Indians while going through it a few years previous to the opening of our story.

"So this is what they call Death Pass, is it?" said Young Wild West to Ned Nippers, the driver.

"Yes, an' a mighty good trap it is, too," was the reply. "We had better keep our eyes skinned, fur it is jest at ther other end of ther pass where ther masked road agents generally git in their work."

"It is, eh? Well, you be on the watch, and if you see the least sign of them before I do, just tell me."

"All right, sir."

Then Wild leaned around and called out to those in the coach and told them to keep cool in case they were halted by any one.

"Don't shoot unless you hear me do so," he added.

As might be supposed, the bride was a very nervous young woman, but her husband calmed her, declaring that Young Wild West knew just what he was doing and would take them through all right, as he had promised.

Handling the ribbons like an old veteran, Wild drove through the pass, which was not more than wide enough in places for two teams to pass.

It was not more than two miles long, and as the sun was gradually sinking in the west, our hero did not let the horses lag any.

Rumbling and rolling along, the outfit soon reached the end of the pass.

They had just emerged from it when, without the least warning a number of queer-looking objects suddenly appeared in the road before the horses. They were ten of the Masked Band of Death Pass with Captain Dark, their leader, at their head.

"Halt!" cried the captain, levelling his revolver at our hero's breast.

The command was instantly obeyed.

The hideous-looking men gathered around the stagecoach, their revolvers ready to shoot.

"What is the matter with you fellows?" asked Young Wild West, smiling as the leader of the Masked Band pointed at him warningly. "You don't think we are afraid of you, do you?"

"Death!" hissed the man ominously.

"Death, eh? Well, it will be your death, my terrible-looking friend, if you don't drop that shooter and hold up your hands! Come, now! Hurry up!"

Wild had been watching his chance, and as quick as a flash he had whipped out one of his shooters and covered the scoundrel.

Captain Dark had been caught napping, for unconsciously he had lowered his weapon.

"If one of your men dares to fire a shot you will go down, Mr. Road Agent with the skull face!" Wild went on, his words ringing out clear and distinct. "Up with your hands, you scoundrel!"

There was something in the boy's voice that had a wonderful effect on the captain of the band.

Before he hardly knew what he was doing, he had dropped his revolver and was holding his hands over his head.

The rest of the masked men stood still in their tracks.

It was something unusual that had happened, and for the time being they knew not what to do.

They were a set of ignorant villains, anyhow, and depended upon a leader to tell them how to proceed.

But here was their leader—the desperate and dashing Captain Dark—with his hands up before the muzzle of a revolver that was in the hand of a boy!

It is hard to tell just what they would have done if two horsemen had not appeared on the scene just then.

They were Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, and they were not a little surprised when they saw the curious lot of men with skeleton faces.

"Look out, you measly coyotes!" roared the scout. "Lead is goin' to fly."

"Hold on, Charlie!" cried Wild, not taking his eyes off the man he was covering. "Don't shoot yet. We want to make a bloodless victory out of this, if we can. We may be able to take the whole gang to Buckhorn Bar with us."

At this two of the masked scoundrels made a leap for the bushes and succeeded in getting out of sight before either Charlie or Jim could shoot.

Crack!

A revolver sounded and a bullet whizzed past the head of Young Wild West.

It disconcerted him just enough to throw his revolver off the line he had been holding it on, and accepting the chance the leader of the masked band made a leap backward and got among the thick bushes that lined the road.

Then all the villains made for cover, some of them firing as they went.

Cheyenne Charlie answered the fire and dropped one of them, but the rest got out of sight in a wonderfully quick time.

"You fellows had better look out for me the next time I meet you!" called out our hero, and then he started the horses and the stagecoach rolled off. "Come on, Charlie and Jim! They are only a lot of amateurs on a masquerade."

But Cheyenne Charlie did not go until he dismounted and got the disguise that was on the villain he had shot.

Then he sprang upon the back of his horse and followed Jim, who was leading the sorrel.

The bride inside the stagecoach had been very much frightened, but when she found that the danger was over she could not help expressing her joy.

"I reckon Young Wild West knows his business," said her husband, and the other two passengers agreed with him.

The stagecoach pulled up at the postoffice in Buckhorn Bar just ten minutes ahead of time that night, and a rousing cheer went up from the crowd that had assembled to meet it.

CHAPTER III.

BUCKHORN BAR.

"Whoa, there!" cried Young Wild West, as he brought the four horses to a halt. "Here we are! All out for Buckhorn Bar!"

He turned the reins over to Ned Nippers and jumped lightly to the ground.

It was the first time our friends had ever been to Buckhorn Bar, it being a new camp.

But in spite of the fact that it was new, it had grown rapidly and the population was now over a hundred.

It was a sort of center for the grazing lands of the range and ranches were scattered about it for a radius of twenty-five miles.

That was why the application of a postoffice there had been granted by the government authorities.

The passengers got out, and when the crowd saw one of their comrades returning with a bride, they broke into another cheer.

That Dick Wood, the young miner, was pretty popular there, was plainly evident.

"So you got here all right, eh, Dick?" said the postmaster, as he shook hands with him after receiving an introduction to the bride. "We thought maybe as how ther stagecoach would be held up by ther Masked Band at Death Pass."

"Well, we was held up, but it didn't amount to anything," was the reply. "Young Wild West was altogether too soon for 'em."

"I led ther horse into a run an' got away from 'em. Hey?"

"Oh! No. He didn't do that. He stopped when he was told

to, but he sorter got ther captain of ther gang covered an' he made him drop his shooter an' hold up his hands. It was ther first time I seen ther masked gang, an' I'll tell you they're a queer lookin' lot, with them skulls over their faces."

"What's that?" spoke up a rough looking fellow, who had been drinking more than was good for him. "Did I hear you say that ther boy who jest drove ther stagecoach in made ther captain of ther robber gang drop his shooter an' hold up his hands?"

"That's jest what happened, Eph."

"That don't seem reasonable. I reckon you're givin' us a lot of taffy. I don't believe you seen a sign of any masked fellers along ther route."

"What's that, my friend?" spoke up Young Wild West, stepping over. "Did I understand you to say that you didn't believe we were stopped on the road by outlaws?"

"That's jest what I said, youngster," and the rough looking miner drew his tall form to its full height and looked at the boy contemptuously.

"Well, I don't know as it really matters whether you believe it or not. You are only one, after all."

"I'm only one, that's right, you impudent snoozer! But if you git me started once you'll think I'm a whole dozen, an' a baker's dozen, at that."

"Did you ever get started?" asked Wild, determined to try the man out and see how much he amounted to.

"Do I ever git started? Hear that, boys! Here's a young snoozer of a boy axin' me if I ever git started! I'm goin' to box his ears fur bein' so impudent. Jest see me do it, now."

He tried to make good his threat, but made a miserable failure of it.

Wild was too nimble to be caught like that and he very easily dodged the blow aimed at him.

"Did you mean to hit me?" he asked, putting on an innocent expression, "or was you only fooling?"

"Foolin'!" roared the miner. "Did any one ever hear of Big Eph doin' any foolin'? Well, I reckon not! Look out, sonny! I'm goin' to chastise yer."

He made a dive for Wild this time, acting as though he meant to make short work of him.

But again he did not reach him.

But our hero did not simply dodge him this time.

He sent out a straight right that caught the fellow on the end of the nose, fetching the claret and making him see stars.

A cry of applause went up from the majority of those present.

They were surprised at the boy's wonderful cleverness.

"Thunderation!" gasped the big man, as he righted himself up. "I'll make you suffer fur that!"

"You'd better leave well enough alone. If you don't you'll get hurt," retorted our hero, as he dodged him again.

"You'll leave well enough alone in a minute!" was the retort. "Jest wait till I git my hands on yer!"

"Hurry up, then. I'm hungry, and I don't intend to fool here all night. The next time you make a grab at me and miss I am going to knock you down. I give you fair warning, so it will be all your fault if you get hurt."

This so enraged the miner that he let out a bellow like that of a maddened bull and made a rush for his youthful antagonist.

Spat!

He got a blow between the eyes that sent him reeling to the ground this time.

But he did not want to stay down, and so was on his feet in a hurry.

Then Wild let him have a left hook under the chin and he straightened out and fell flat on his back.

"Say when you have got enough," said Wild, standing over him with folded arms.

"I've go-got enough," was the gasping reply. "I ain't no hog. I made a mistake, young feller. I reckon you made ther leader of ther outlaws hold up his hands all right. Don't hit me ag'in; I'm goin' to git up."

"Certainly I won't hit you again, unless you try to hit me. Here! I'll help you up."

The boy stepped over, and catching the man's hands, gave a quick pull and stood him on his feet.

Big Eph was certainly a hard looking subject just then.

The blood was trickling from his nose and his lips were cut and swelling rapidly.

"You licked me fair an' square, young feller," he said. "But that don't say that I love you any more than I did when I fust set eyes on you. It ain't human natur' to do

anything like that. I won't contradict you ag'in, but I may try to lick you some time."

"You may as well get right at it now, then," said Wild, starting for him.

"No!" and the big miner quickly got back out of the way and headed for a one-story building across the street that had a sign at the front declaring it to be a saloon.

"Go ahead and put the horses up, Nippers," our hero called out to the man on the box of the stagecoach. "I am going to see about getting something to eat."

"There's ther only place you kin git accommodated," spoke up the postmaster, who was standing on the stoop with the mailbags in his hand.

He had been too much interested in listening to what was said about the holdup to think of distributing the mail, and when the tussle between Young Wild West and Big Eph took place no one else thought about it.

Wild looked in the direction the man pointed and saw a pretty good sized building that was a story and a half high.

There was a barn and sheds in the rear of it, too, and it was there where Ned Nippers was driving the stagecoach.

"I guess that place will do us," our hero remarked, turning to his two partners, who had dismounted and were holding all three of the horses.

"I reckon so," retorted Cheyenne Charlie. "It looks better than a good many places we've had to put up at, anyhow."

"Well, if we can't get suited there we can go into camp and cook our own grub," observed Jim Dart.

They left Dick Wood and his bride and the other two passengers at the postoffice, relating the exciting time they had gone through when the hideous looking masked gang held them up, and led their horses over to the tavern, as it was called.

They had no difficulty in getting accommodations there.

It had been the headquarters of Jack Jefferson, the man who had sold the Overland route out to Young Wild West, and when the proprietor learned that the business had changed hands he was very pleasant to Wild and his partners.

Cheyenne Charlie went into the bar-room and exhibited the disguise he had taken from the road agent he had shot, and great excitement prevailed.

Though the masked band had made things warm about the vicinity of Death Pass for the past month, this was the first time any inhabitant of Buckhorn Bar had ever had a chance to get a good look at the horrible masks they wore.

One of the miners wanted to put on the disguise to see how he would look in it, so Charlie quickly rigged him up.

Many were the exclamations of surprise that went up from the crowd—for there were eighteen or twenty men there by this time—and when the man looked at himself in the only glass that the tavern afforded, he could scarcely believe his senses.

"No wonder them fellers has been scarin' people half to death," he said, as he took the things off and handed them to Charlie. "I wouldn't wear that rig fur a fortune."

The sun had gone down by this time and the man of all work about the tavern was lighting the smoky oil lamps that were used to light the place after dark.

Wild suddenly realized for about the third time that he was very hungry.

He spoke to the landlord about it.

"Supper will be ready in less than ten minutes," he was informed.

"Just show us where we can wash up a bit, will you?" he asked.

"Certainly. Come right this way."

Our hero and Jim started off after the landlord, and folding up the cape with the mask and skullcap inside it, Charlie followed them.

Ten minutes later they were enjoying a hearty meal, which was a fitting ending to the rough journey from Stony Flats to Buckhorn Bar.

After supper was over Wild and his partners came out into the store part of the tavern again.

They found the place pretty well packed, for it had become noted about what had happened at the commencement of Death Pass and the inhabitants of the mining camp were eager to see Young Wild West.

As Wild walked up to the bar and made a purchase of some cigars the crowd gave him a cheer.

The general appearance of the young deadshot was enough to cause the average man to think well of him, let alone the fact that he had got the best of the masked band of Death Pass and brought the passengers and mail through in safety.

Cheyenne Charlie, too, came in for a big share of glory, for he had dropped one of the villains as he was in the act of firing at Young Wild West, and then he had taken the risk of dismounting to possess himself of the remarkable disguise the fellow had on.

"You're a set of real dandies from Dandyville, you are!" declared Tom Mullick, the miner who was called the mayor of the mining camp. "I reckon you've got to take part in ther shootin' match we're goin' to have here to-morrer. What do you think about it, boys?"

A cry of approval went up from all hands.

"Young Wild West runs ther Overland route now, an' that makes him on a footin' with any citizen of Buckhorn Bar."

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Wild. "We are always in for any kind of sport, when it is agreeable to all hands."

"Right you are!" declared the landlord.

"It's agreeable all right. There's home fellers here what says that you fellers are dead shots, an' that you're ther boss of 'em all. But that don't make no difference; I'm willin' to take my chances, an' I guess ther rest are, too. We was a little afraid of Dan Duncan, ther kingpin of gamblers, 'cause they say he never misses when he fires with a shooter or a rifle. But now we've got Young Wild West to look out fur, too."

"I'd rather see him win ther match than Dan Duncan," spoke up one of the miners. "Duncan can't seem to play a square game of poker, an' I don't like a man what ain't square, anyhow."

Wild looked around as though he expected to see Dan Duncan there, but one glance told him that he was not.

"I guess the man you refer to is not here," he remarked.

"No, he ain't here now," retorted the mayor. "He spends ther biggest part of his time huntin' and prospectin'. He comes here every now an' then an' fleeces a few hundreds out of ther gang what's fools enough to play with him. He caught me onct, an' that's enough. I thought I knowed somethin' about stackin' ther cards, but I found he was altogether too much fur me. He's a gentlemanly feller all right, an' he minds his own business, but he's about ther best man at cards I ever struck, an' he says he's never been beat at shootin' at a target, an' that his black horse is ther fastest that was ever foaled."

"Is that so?" asked our hero, thinking of his gallant sorrel. "Well, he might get fooled all around, if he happens to strike the right one. I think I can shoot as straight as this fellow can, and I am certain that I have got a horse that can't be outdistanced."

"Good enough! We're liable to have a high old time to-morrer, then!" exclaimed the mayor. "After ther shootin' match is over we may be able to git up a horse race."

"Here comes Dan Duncan now!" cried some one, as a good looking man of thirty attired in a velvet suit entered the door.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK DUNCAN, GAMBLER.

Captain Dark of the Masked Band of Death Pass was a much surprised man when Young Wild West, by his coolness and easy way of taking things, got the drop on him.

The villain knew there was not the smallest chance of his living if he did not obey the command and drop his shooter and hold up his hands.

He could tell that by the flash in the handsome boy's eyes and the ring of his voice.

That was why he obeyed.

And when he finally got the chance to leap back into the bushes he made no effort to draw his other revolver and fire. His one thought just then was to get to cover, and that as quickly as possible.

As soon as he found he could no longer be seen by those on the road he uttered a sharp whistle.

This meant for the men to follow him.

So they did so, leaving one of their number dead, as the reader knows.

The scoundrels got into their retreat in short order, the majority of them wondering why it was that the captain had not ordered them to make a rush and capture the stagecoach.

"Keep a double guard!" the leader exclaimed, as they filed into the cave. "It may be that Young Wild West will follow us."

But when ten minutes had passed and the men reported that the stagecoach and the two men who were riding behind it had gone on, Captain Dark felt a little easier.

"I don't know why it was, boys," he said, addressing his men. "I can't imagine what made me act that way. Young Wild West didn't appear to be the least bit put out when we burst out and I called on him to halt. He seemed to enjoy it more than anything else. I guess that was why he got the drop on me. Anyhow, I suppose I did the right thing when I obeyed him, for he meant what he said—I am certain of that."

"That's so," spoke up his lieutenant. "If you hadn't done as he told you jest as you did he would have sent a bullet through your heart. His finger was right on ther trigger, an' it seemed to be itchin' to press it. From where I stood I could see all that quite plainly."

"Well, the boy won the bet he made yesterday, then. I didn't think he would, but I guess I underestimated him a little. But my turn will come, just as sure as the sun rises and sets. I will wipe out Young Wild West for what he did to me this day. He is a dangerous fellow, anyhow, and the quicker he's out of the way, the better it will be for us."

The villains agreed with him on this, of course.

"He is the coolest fellow I ever stacked up against," went on the captain. "But that does not say that I will not get the best of him. I will take a ride over to Buckhorn Bar this evening and see how the miners take to him. It is more than probable that he will stay there until the day after to-morrow and drive the stagecoach back to Stony Flats."

"Sartin he will do that," spoke up the second in command. "Cap, I s'pose you'll stay all night over there, as you're goin' to take part in ther shootin' match to-morrer."

"Yes, I suppose I might as well. I will have to spend a good part of my time in the mining camp, anyway, to keep them from suspecting anything wrong about me. I'll go over to-night, and four or five of you can drop in town accidentally to-morrow morning and stay to see the shooting match. If you don't see the end of Young Wild West before you leave it will be because I am no good! Just remember that. I am going to get square with him for making me drop my revolver and hold up my hands! It is about the worst thing I ever had happen to me."

"Well," said one of the men, "ther young feller seems to be a good deal different from ther ordinary run of people. Why, he was a-laughin' ther most of ther time."

"That was what made us stand still an' do nothin', more than anything else," observed another.

"Well," said the captain, after a pause. "I suppose you had better go and get the remains of Sutherland and dig a grave. It's the last thing we can do for him, poor fellow."

Four of the villains went out and brought the body in.

When Captain Dark found that the disguise had been taken from the slain man he shrugged his shoulders uneasily.

"That is bad work," he said. "I don't understand how it is that those fellows had enough nerve to stop long enough to take the things. We have got to be on the lookout, boys, and there is no mistake about it."

The man was duly buried and then the captain ordered drinks to be served to all hands.

A little whisky apiece made them feel better, since they were used to being cheered in that way.

After he had eaten supper, Captain Dark called the Chinaman and soon was rigged out in a natty suit of velvet.

The suit was pretty well worn, but he was a man who had a way of keeping things looking nice and as it was the rig he always wore when he went to Buckhorn Bar, he, of course, wanted it now.

Captain Dark was a rather handsome man.

He was not more than forty, if he was that, and when he mounted his horse just as the sun was setting he made a decidedly dashing and picturesque appearance.

The powerful black horse he rode was eager to go, so he let the steed have its own way.

"I hardly think Young Wild West will recognize me, though he may have noticed me over in Stony Flat when he made the bet. I was standing by at the time," muttered the villain. "But if he does recognize me as the man who was there, he will not know me to be the man he got the best of to-day. But I will fix Young Wild West before I leave Buckhorn Bar, or something very funny will happen!"

With this thought uppermost in his mind the villain rode into the mining camp and halted in front of the tavern.

Throwing the rein over his horse's head, he walked into the bar-room and one of the first he saw in there was Young Wild West.

He was in time to hear the miner say: "Here comes Dan Duncan now!" and turning to him, he remarked in an off-hand way:

"Was you talking about me, my friend?"

"Well, yes. We was talkin' about ther shootin' match that's goin' to take place to-morrer, an' some one allowed that you was a wonderful good shot," was the reply.

"Oh! I am a pretty good shot. But I suppose there are men right here in town who stand as much show of winning the match as I do."

"Well, there'll be one who'll make you hustle to win, Duncan," spoke up the mayor.

"Who is he?" asked the villain, showing that he was just the least bit interested.

"Young Wild West."

"Young Wild West? I don't know him, I guess."

"Oh, yes you do," said Wild, stepping forward. "Wasn't you over in Stony Flats yesterday when I made a bet that I would fetch the stagecoach safely to Buckhorn Bar?"

"Oh, yes! Excuse me, young fellow. I am a poor hand at remembering names. I believe that was the name they called you. I remember your face now, too. So you are a good shot, eh?"

"Well, that is not for me to say. I don't believe in bragging, you know. I have been asked to take part in the shoot, and I guess I will. I might make a pretty good score. What is the distance to be, if I may ask?"

"Three hundred yards," replied the mayor. "Ther prize is a two hundred dollar watch that was bought in Denver. There's only one prize, so ther second man gits nothin'."

"And the entrance fee is——"

"Twenty-five dollars. Ther money goes to Sam Daggett, who got his leg blowed off while firin' a blast last week."

"Well, I and my partners will enter the match if there are no objections. We will help the poor fellow who lost his leg all we can."

"Of course there will be no objections," spoke up Dan Duncan, as we will call him for the present. "The more the better. The receipts are to go for a good purpose."

"That's right," nodded the mayor. Somehow neither Wild nor Jim and Charlie took much stock in Duncan.

They readily saw that he was a smooth-tongued rascal.

Our hero could pick a man of his stamp out every time.

And Charlie and Jim were nearly as good at it.

Experience had taught them a whole lot in that line.

Wild meant to keep a sharp eye on the man, for he saw that he was an object of much interest in the eyes of Duncan.

"He is after me, I'll bet!" thought our hero. "Well, I don't know what for, but I guess I will find out before I go away from this place for good."

Duncan walked leisurely into the back room after the conversation about the coming shooting match waned.

Nearly all those present knew what he was looking for.

He was after some one's money.

Being an adept at the art of dealing and playing cards, he would have an easy thing of it with the miners, as he had done before.

"I reckon you must know somethin' about playin' cards, Young Wild West," said Tom Mullick, the mayor of the camp.

"Oh, I understand the game pretty well, but I am not a believer in gambling," replied Wild.

"But you have played, I reckon?"

"Oh, yes; when I had a purpose in view."

"Did you ever play with card sharps?"

"Yes, those are the only sort I ever played with. I never sat down to play for the purpose of winning money."

"An' you could hold your own ag'in ther sharps?"

"Yes, I always managed to more than hold my own."

"Gee!" exclaimed the mayor. "I reckon you'd be jest ther one to tackle Dan Duncan, then. I know he cheats, but I ain't been able to catch him at it."

"Well," said our hero, after a moment's thought, "if you say so, I will take a hand in the game. We will have it understood that it is to be a fair and square game, and that the first one caught cheating will be thrown out of the game and forced to give up his winnings, if he has won anything."

"You will, Young Wild West? Well, you're jest my huckleberry! Come on! I've jest been itchin' to git in a game with Duncan, but I was sorter 'fraid that he'd clean me out."

Charlie and Jim were not much surprised at Wild's taking a hand at poker.

They knew he was trying to find out what sort of a fellow Dick Duncan was, and there was no better way to do it than

The gambler was standing in the back room, as though waiting for some one to come in when our friends walked back there.

"What do you say if we have a little game for an hour or two?" he observed, looking at the mayor.

"I don't stand much of a show with you," was the reply. "You are too slick for me."

"Nonsense! Just because I have had a little luck lately you think I understand the game better than you do. If a man is lucky enough to get a good hand at cards, and knows how to play half decent, he is bound to win. It is all luck with me."

"Well, I've got a few dollars that I kin afford to lose, I s'pose," said the mayor, as he walked over and took a seat at an empty table.

"Won't you take a hand, Young Wild West?" spoke up the gambler, as he followed the miner's example. "Two-handed draw poker is hardly any game at all."

"If it is to be a fair and square game I will take a hand, just to pass a couple of hours away," retorted Wild.

"A fair and square game?" echoed Duncan, affecting surprise. "Why, I assure you that I have no idea that it will be anything else."

"Well," answered Wild, "I seldom play cards, but when I do play I always play square, unless I see some one is cheating me. In that case I generally turn the tables on him and expose him."

"I hope you don't think that I would play anything but a square game, Young Wild West."

As the gambler said this he put on an injured air and looked at Wild keenly.

"No, sir, I did not mean to imply that there was anything crooked about you, Mr. Duncan. I merely spoke that way to let you and the mayor know that I was going in for a fair and square game."

"Oh! All right. Landlord, give us the cards."

The deck was soon forthcoming and then they cut for deal.

Tom Mullick got the deal.

"We will make it a dollar ante and no limit," said Duncan.

"All right," retorted our hero, and the mayor nodded assent.

The first hand no one had a pair, so they made what is termed a jack-pot of it, which means that in order to begin the betting one must have a pair of jacks, or better.

It was the gambler's turn to deal, and as he gathered up the cards Wild kept a sharp eye on him.

He hardly expected that the man would begin cheating right at the very start, but he thought he had better look out for him, anyhow.

As Duncan pushed the cards to the mayor to cut, Wild saw him drop something in his lap with the other hand.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUEL.

The gambler was starting right in at a cheating game; of that our hero was certain.

And he meant to bring him up the short turn the instant he was certain of it.

Wild looked at his hand and found that he had four kings in it.

He felt like smiling, but refrained from doing so.

"This fellow must think he has a couple of greenhorns to deal with," he thought. "It is the same old game that has been practised for years. He has four aces in his lap, beyond the shadow of a doubt. He was afraid to risk getting them after the cut was made, so he took them beforehand. Well, this will be about the last hand in the game, I think."

The truth was that the gambler had very skillfully arranged the cards so he could deal Wild four kings and the mayor four queens, providing they were cut in the right place. And they were cut just as he wanted them.

If he had known this beforehand he would have taken four aces from the pack in the regular way, but, as our hero thought, he had not run the risk, but had kept them out.

However, he dealt himself five, the same as the others.

Then he very deftly placed four under him and got those that were in his lap.

Wild could not see him do this, but he knew what he was up to, just the same.

Wild was the first to draw cards, and he took one, as a matter of course.

Tom Mullick also drew one, and then the dealer did likewise.

"There must be something in the wind," he remarked with a smile. "All looking for a flush, perhaps."

"Or a straight," added Wild.

"Straights don't count in this game—not the way they play it in this house," spoke up the mayor.

"So I was informed the other night," said the gambler. "Well, Mr. West, it is your bet."

"Before I bet I guess I will count the cards," exclaimed Wild, reaching over and picking up the balance of the deck. "There ought to be fifty-two cards, but I doubt if there is."

The face of Dick Duncan flushed.

"You should have counted the cards before the game started," he said. "It is no time to do it now."

"Oh! I guess it don't matter. You have no objections, have you, Mr. Mullick?"

"Sartinly I ain't," retorted the mayor, looking just the least bit surprised.

"Well, I will count them, then," and he proceeded to do so, Duncan looking on with a steely glitter in his eyes.

"Ah!" exclaimed Young Wild West; "there are four missing, just as I thought. Please get up, Mr. Duncan. They might be on your chair. I think you dropped them when you were dealing."

"What do you mean?" cried the gambler, hotly. "You don't mean to insinuate that I am cheating, do you?"

"I didn't say so, but if the shoe fits you, you can wear it!"

Then it was that the gambler turned all colors.

But he retained his coolness by a great effort.

"If you have such a suspicion of me I have the right to think that you are cheating," he retorted.

"Never mind about that. We will soon find out who is the cheat. Just get up off that chair, please."

"I won't!"

"You won't? Well, I guess you will!" and reaching out suddenly, Young Wild West caught him by the collar and dragged him from the chair.

"Here's ther four cards!" cried the mayor, picking them up from the chair. "Well, I'll be jingood!"

"I knew it!" said our hero. "I saw him put cards in his lap as he began to deal. The four he changed for them are the ones he was sitting upon. I'll bet a twenty-dollar gold piece to a silver quarter that he has four aces in his hand!"

By this time a crowd had surged into the room and the place was pretty well packed with men, who wanted to see what the row was about.

Wild kept his hold upon the gambler's collar, watching him like a cat does a mouse.

"Now we see who the cheat is," he said, quietly. "I guess we will break up the game. I never play with people who cheat."

By a mighty effort Duncan tore himself loose.

He sprang back a couple of steps and grabbed for his revolver.

"Take your hand away from that shooter!"

The command rang out sharply, and then all hands saw a revolver in the hand of Young Wild West.

It was pointed directly at the breast of the gambler, too, and the muzzle did not move the thousandth part of an inch.

"If there is going to be any shooting done over this matter, I am going to be the one to do it, Dan Duncan!" said our hero, coolly. "Just take it easy now, or you'll never cheat again at cards, I assure you. When I shoot I don't miss, and if my revolver went off just now the bullet would find your heart."

The gambler suddenly changed his manner.

He folded his arms across his chest, and looking at Wild, said:

"The cards were under me, sure enough, but how they got there I do not know. They must have dropped when I was not paying any attention. I don't blame you for accusing me, Young Wild West. But I was not trying to cheat."

"Let it go at that, then. But the game is off. Take back your stakes, Mr. Mullick, and I will do the same."

The mayor hastened to obey.

Then Wild took his share and left that of the gambler on the table.

Dan Duncan pocketed his without a word and sat down.

Our hero then pushed his way through the crowd and went out into the bar-room, followed by his two partners and the mayor.

"You beat anything I ever seen, Young Wild West!" exclaimed the mayor, putting out his hand and shaking that of our hero warmly.

"Oh, I don't know about that," was the reply. "I thought Duncan was a regular crook when I sat down to play. I shouldn't have taken a hand in it if I had not thought so."

Now, gentlemen," and he turned to the crowd in the bar-room, "you see how easy it is to get fleeced out of your money. Gambling is no good, no matter how it is done, but if you must play draw poker, play with honest people. That is the advice I give you."

This was said in such a loud voice that Dan Duncan could not help hearing it.

He promptly came out of the back room.

"Young Wild West," he said, "you seem to have a grudge against me. If that is the case we had better go outside and fight it out."

"I am willing. I assure you," was the calm retort. "How do you want to fight?"

"With bowie knives, if that suits you."

"That just suits me, Dan Duncan. Come on!"

It was arranged so quickly that the miners could scarcely credit their own senses.

Never had they seen a duel got up in such short order before.

"I should like to have a second to see that I have fair play," said the gambler, looking around among the miners.

"Go ahead and choose one. Cheyenne Charlie will act for me."

The villain soon picked out one of the men in the room, and then he buckled his belt a little tighter and walked out.

"I will use my own knife and you can use yours," he said, drawing the weapon.

Wild took his hunting knife from his belt.

Then those who were standing nearest to them could see that the blade of the gambler's was at least two inches longer than that of our hero.

Cheyenne Charlie mentioned the fact.

"Never mind about that," said Wild, smiling in his cool way. "The length of the blades won't count in this fight."

A confident smile played about the mouth of the gambler.

He was called an expert at fighting with a bowie and he thought he was going to have an easy victory over his youthful opponent.

But Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart knew better.

They knew that Young Wild West had never met his equal at that particular business.

They were not the least bit worried as to the outcome.

"Are you ready?" asked the mayor, who took it upon himself to referee the fight.

"Before we start in I want to tell Duncan that if he attempts to draw his revolver before I get through with him he will be a dead man before he gets it from the holster," said Wild.

"All right. I reckon he heard what you said. Now, then, are you ready?"

The two duelists were standing on the ground where the rays from an oil lamp shone full upon them.

Both nodded in the affirmative, and then the mayor told them to go ahead.

The two blades came together with a sharp click and the sparks flew.

Then began what the miners called the prettiest fight they had ever seen.

Duncan was really an expert and he got through some very pretty motions.

He was the aggressor at the start, but he soon found that Young Wild West parried every blow with perfect ease, so then he adopted different tactics.

He tried to draw the boy on.

But Wild knew exactly what he was doing.

He was not going to run in an unnecessary danger, for he did not underrate the man he was fighting with.

He did not want to kill him, but simply meant to disarm him and place him at his mercy.

There was to be a shooting match on the morrow, and he wanted to see how much the gambler knew about shooting with a rifle.

The two stepped nimbly about, lunging and parrying, their bodies bending like reeds in a gale.

Wild was well up in all the tricks his opponent tried to play and he kept him going all the time.

When three minutes had expired not a drop of blood had been drawn.

It was plain to all that Duncan meant to kill Young Wild West if he could, while, on the other hand, they could easily observe that our hero was simply working to disarm his opponent.

Wild thought it about time to end the fight.

There was no need of wasting a lot of exertion for nothing.

Suddenly he made a lunge and caused his foot to slip purposely.

Then Duncan thought he had him.

He made a vicious downward stroke with his bowie, the point of the blade being aimed directly at our hero's heart.

But instead of slipping, Wild had gained a fresh footing, and with a quick movement he struck the fingers of the gambler a heavy crack with the back of his blade, at the same time darting nimbly aside.

Clang! The knife flew from Duncan's hand and struck a stone seven or eight feet away with a loud ring.

"Now your life belongs to me!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "You are a good one with a knife, Dan Duncan, but you have a few things to learn yet. Shall I cut your craven heart in twain, or shall I let you live?"

"I guess you had better let me live," was the rather faint reply. "Life is sweet, you know."

"All right, then. Live it is. But remember one thing, Dan Duncan. No matter when or where we may meet, nor how often, don't ever attempt to do anything but deal fair with me."

Without making a reply, the gambler walked to the stoop and went inside the tavern.

The miner who had acted as his second picked up his knife and followed him in and handed it to him.

That ended the excitement for that evening.

Our friends did not remain up very late.

They were all early risers, and that made them retire pretty early, in order to get the sleep that was necessary.

Dan Duncan was pretty silent for perhaps an hour after the duel, and then he accepted the invitation of a couple of miners he had played with several times before and got into a game.

Things had not turned out exactly as he had expected, but he was one of the sort who could make the best of that which happened.

He played until a late hour, and when the landlord showed him the room he was to occupy for the night he turned in.

It was quite late the next morning when he got up, and when he went downstairs he found Young Wild West and his two partners taking it easy on the stoop.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, politely. "I hope you have no hard feelings toward me for what happened last night."

"I guess we had better forget all about that," retorted Wild.

"Good! I agree with you."

He tried to get them in conversation, but could not do it very well, so went off and got his breakfast.

Dan Duncan, alias Captain Dark, was not making much headway in getting square on Young Wild West.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHOOTING MATCH.

Young Wild West and his partners spent the morning in getting the stagecoach that ran over the Overland route into proper shape.

It needed considerable repairing, and they were just the ones to do it, as they had a knowledge of things in general.

Some nails and screws put the old rattle-box into pretty good trim.

"How long are you going to run this business, Wild?" Charlie asked.

"Not very long," was the reply. "Just as soon as the Masked Band of Death Pass has been put out of business I will sell out to some one. The chances are that I will be able to more than double my money."

"I reckon you will. Jefferson must have had a pretty faint heart, or he would never have sold out for such a small sum. He didn't stop to think that their blamed outlaws couldn't last forever."

"They won't last long after we once find out where their hang-out is," spoke up Dart.

Our friends had finished fixing things to their liking when noon came, and then they went to dinner.

Dan Duncan was at the table with them, but they had nothing to say to him, though they all kept an eye on the scoundrel.

The shooting match was to take place at two o'clock, and work on the various claims was suspended for the afternoon.

Everybody seemed to be greatly interested.

Not only was there a lot of sport to be derived from it, but it was for a worthy object.

Long before the appointed time there were fifty entries in the match, and this meant that the unfortunate man who had lost a leg would derive a neat sum.

The watch was a fine one, too, but that had been bought by the money that had been raised by a subscription, so the whole amount of the entrance fees went to the man.

Wild and his partners were well toward the tail end of the list, and they were glad of it, as the participants were to shoot according to the order in which their names had been placed.

It was but a few minutes after two when it was announced by Tom Mullick, the mayor, that the match would begin.

He made a few remarks concerning how the match had been gotten up and stated that it was to be one shot apiece at a target placed three hundred yards from the scratch.

As the money had been collected, there was nothing to do now but to go ahead and shoot.

Many of the miners did not make any claim to being good shots, but they had entered just to help along the cause.

The mayor had a list of all who were to take part in the shooting, so he called off the first man.

The target was put on the door of a wrecked shanty, which stood against a bank, and it was circular in form, whitewashed with a bulls-eye of black about four inches in diameter in the center.

The first man fired and hit the edge of the door, just missing the target.

The next did a little better, and the third came within a few inches of the bulls-eye.

The third shot remained the best until some thirty men had fired and then a young man, who had been practising considerably for the event, managed to touch the edge of the bulls-eye.

A cheer went up from the crowd when this was announced.

The majority of them had no choice, but they wanted to see some good shooting.

The fortieth man to shoot was Dan Duncan, and when he stepped up to the line there was an air of confidence about him.

"One hundred dollars that I make a bulls-eye!" he said, producing a bag of money from his pocket.

No one took him up.

"Gentlemen, none of you have ever seen me shoot; how is it you don't want to take me up?" he asked, tantalizingly.

"Go on an' shoot!" exclaimed the mayor. "This ain't no bettin' game, anyhow."

"Oh! All right, then," and the villain raised his rifle to his shoulder and took aim.

Crack!

As the report rang out the man attending the target threw up his hand.

"A bulls-eye!" he shouted. "Half an inch from the center."

Several of the men joined in a cheer for the man who had made the best shot yet.

The gambler's shot remained the best one until Cheyenne Charlie stepped up, the forty-eighth man.

The scout fired and there was some delay before the result was announced.

Finally it was called out that he had made a bulls-eye at the very same distance from the center as Duncan.

The gambler went down to the target, as did Charlie and some of the rest.

Duncan's bullet had gone a little to the left of the center and Charlie's a trifle to the right.

It was a sure case of tie.

Jim Dart came next, Wild having arranged it so he would be the last one to shoot.

Jim placed a bullet right alongside that of Duncan and dangerously near the center.

The cheer that went up was great now.

The score had been beaten.

With flushed face Dan Duncan pulled out his money bag and exclaimed:

"Five hundred dollars that the score is not beaten!"

"I'll take that!"

It was Young Wild West who spoke.

He was just walking up to the scratch when the challenge was offered, and he accepted it in a twinkling.

There were three or four of the members of the masked band present, but no one but their leader knew who they were.

They waited with as much interest as any of the rest as the mayor took the stakes of the bet.

Young Wild West would virtually have to make a center to beat Jim's shot.

But he had the greatest of confidence that he could do it. Taking a quick aim, he pressed the trigger.

Crack!

The echoes of the report had scarcely died out when the man at the target uttered a yell.

"A dead center!" he called out.

A rush was made for the target now.

All hands wanted to see the result of the shot.

Though Dan Duncan believed the announcement was correct, he thought there might be a chance to raise a dispute.

But when he got there he immediately gave it up.

Young Wild West had certainly made a dead center.

"Gentlemen," said he, turning to the crowd, "I am not a hard loser, by any means. The money belongs to Young Wild West."

This speech pleased the men somewhat and they gave him a cheer.

But if they only knew what was passing through the mind of the villain they would not have cheered him.

He was at that very moment thinking of some way to put Young Wild West out of existence.

The crowd soon marched back to the tavern, where refreshments were to be served.

Then a general good time was to follow.

The mayor presented our hero with the watch, using all the eloquence he could command in doing so, and Wild took it gracefully and responded with a few well chosen remarks.

Then, true to their custom, the miners began filling up on liquor.

Some called it fluid lightning, some bug-juice, others rusty nails and vinegar, and still others designated it as "pizen."

But it was just common whisky, after all.

Wild and Jim never tasted any of the stuff, but Cheyenne Charlie occasionally took a horn or two of it.

The scout joined in with them in drinking his health and when our hero and Dart called for some of the ginger pop the tavern keeper happened to have, Tom Mullick nodded.

"I used to be temperance when I was young," he said with a laugh. "You'll git over that, boys."

"I hardly think so," answered Wild. "I never saw where there was any benefit derived from drinking the stuff, and I assure you that I have no desire for it. I don't even know how it tastes."

"Nor I, either," declared Jim, "and I don't want to know."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, let it go at that. Everybody to their taste. This is a free country, and if a man don't want to wear shoes he can go barefooted."

"If I had won the match I should have filled a glass with the best liquor the house affords and drink to the health of everybody," observed Dan Duncan, who could not keep still.

"Well, you didn't happen to win it," retorted Wild, coolly.

"That is very true. I am only telling you what I would have done."

"Well, it isn't necessary to tell me. I am not going to pattern after you."

"Oh! You don't have to do that."

Duncan now had two of his men on either side of him, and it occurred to him that it would be a good time to get in a quarrel with the boy and shoot him.

If he didn't get the chance one of his men would.

Filling a glass full of the contents of the bottle on the counter before him, he held it up and purposely spilled some on our hero's shoulder.

Wild stepped back and then the gambler burst into a laugh.

"You don't like to have the stuff touch your clothes, even, do you?" he said. "Well, you are a funny fellow, Young Wild West."

He moved a little nearer, still holding the glass up.

Wild knew what he was up to, and quick as a flash he whipped out his shooter and smashed the glass with a bullet.

"Take it easy, Duncan," he exclaimed. "If you don't stop fooling with me I'll fix you the same as I did the glass."

At this those of the members of the masked gang who were present drew their revolvers.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart had theirs out as quick.

"The first man what raises a gun will go under!" exclaimed the scout. "I mean business, I do!"

They saw that bullets were likely to fly at any minute.

"My friends," said Young Wild West, looking at the men who had taken it up for the gambler, "I don't know who you are, but if you value your lives you will put your shooters back in your belt."

"We ain't interested in this game," answered one of them. "We seen that it was three ag'in one, an' we believe in fair play, that's all."

"Well, you will get all the fair play you want if you are not mighty careful. Put up your shooters!"

The last was said with a commanding ring.

Then, much to the surprise of those standing about, the villains obeyed.

They were easily cowed, it seemed.

"It looks to me," resumed our hero, "that some one wants my life. If any of you fellows want it just say the word and we will go outside and shoot it out."

"I guess we ain't after you," spoke up one. "We never seen you afore to-day. It seemed to me, though, that you was tryin' to rub it into this man. You beat him shootin', an' that ought to satisfy you."

"I guess you didn't see all that took place. Did you see him drop whisky on me intentionally?"

"No, he didn't do it intentionally. It was an accident."

"See here, if you insist that it was an accident I will pick you up and throw you out doors. You haven't got enough of the argument, it seems, and I'll guarantee I'll give you the full limit if you open your mouth once more."

"I don't believe you kin throw me out——"

Then something happened.

Wild grabbed the man about the waist and lifted him over his shoulder.

The door was open, and with a rush that would have done credit to a football player, he made a dash for it.

Just as he reached it he lowered his body suddenly and gave a jerk backwards.

The result was all he cared for.

The man shot out of the place like a catapult!

Wild had got the small of his back over his shoulder, and that had put the villain at a disadvantage.

He had been unable to get hold of the boy before he was shot forward.

Of course while this took place Charlie and Jim kept the rest of the villains covered.

"Does anyone else want to go out in a hurry?" asked our hero, as he brushed back his long hair and looked at the gambler and the others.

There was no reply.

"Just mind your own business and keep your shooters in your belt while you are in my presence," observed our hero, as he walked to the other end of the counter and got a light for his cigar.

The villains concluded to take his advice.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STAGECOACH ESCAPES THE MASKED BAND AGAIN.

The next morning at eight o'clock the stagecoach was to start for Stony Flats.

Wild had everything in trim for the trip; and while he did not intend to drive this time, he intended to ride along close behind until the outfit got through Death Pass.

Dan Duncan, the gambler, and the men who had stuck to him in the quarrel disappeared just after nightfall and no one knew where they went.

"There's somethin' strange about that gambler feller," said Cheyenne Charlie. "I wonder where he keeps himself when he ain't around here?"

"He may go over to Stony Flats," Jim answered. "That's where he was when Wild bought out the Overland route."

"Yes, that's where he was then. But it ain't likely that he's goin' to ride way over there ag'in very soon. Why, ther mayor says that he's here about every day, an' sometimes he stays all night."

"He has got some hang-out closer by than Stony Flats, you can depend on that," spoke up Young Wild West. "Well, so long as he lets me alone and behaves himself I shan't bother him. But if he keeps up the game he has started to play he will surely get all he wants."

Things ran along very smoothly at the mining camp that night.

There was no excitement at all, and the majority of the men retired rather early.

The next morning Ned Nippers drove up in front of the postoffice with the stagecoach.

"All aboard for Stony Flats!" he called out. "This is Young Wild West's Overland route, an' it goes right through. All aboard!"

There were four passengers to go over, and they soon got aboard.

When the postmaster came out with the mail bags he whispered to our hero:

"There's quite a lot of money bein' sent away on this trip. Some of ther miners have made arrangements to have their families come out here, an' they're sendin' their money to 'em to pay their way."

"It would be quite a haul for them if the Masked Band of Death Pass got hold of it, then, wouldn't it?" queried Wild.

"Yes, I was thinking about that," and the man showed that he was not a little anxious.

"Does any outsiders know of this? I mean any one who might be regarded as not being straight?"

"Well, I don't know. Ther gambler that you had ther trouble with knows it, I reckon. He was in here when one of ther men was talkin' about it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Wild. "Well, it may be that Dan Duncan is all right, as far as robbing stagecoaches go, but I am very glad you told me this, just the same."

"You don't think he's got anything to do with ther gang with ther death faces, do you?"

"Well, I haven't seen or heard anything that would make me think that way. But it is more than likely that the band of rascals has a spy here in town to find out what is going on."

"That's so. You ain't goin' over to Stony Flats with ther outfit to-day, then?"

"No, but I will ride out with them as far as Death Pass."

"An' then you'll come back here an' take things easy, I suppose?"

"No!" exclaimed Wild. "Then I will start in to find where this terrible band of robbers has its headquarters. The Masked Band of Death Pass has got to be hunted down and I am going to be the one to do it."

"You will want a pretty big crowd with you to do it, I guess. They are a pretty desperate lot."

"Not so awful desperate. We rather took the starch out of them the day before yesterday, and I guess my two partners and myself can manage to attend to them. We will try it, anyhow."

The postmaster looked admiringly at the daring boy.

"You're one of ther kind what's bound to win, I reckon," he said.

"Well, there is only one way to win, you know, and that is to keep at it."

"Yes, I reckon that's it. Ther most of us git discouraged too quick."

The driver was waiting for our hero to give him the word to go ahead, and looking at his watch, he saw that the time was up.

The four passengers and the mail bags were aboard, so there was nothing to hold the stagecoach now.

"Go ahead!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "If you are bothered by any one we'll be pretty close by to help you."

Ned Nippers cracked his long-lashed whip and the leaders began to prance.

The next moment the lumbering vehicle rolled off on its journey.

It had not been gone more than five minutes when Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart mounted their horses and started after it.

Somehow it ran in the head of our hero that the masked gang would attempt to rob the stagecoach that morning.

He had not been so strongly of that opinion until the postmaster told him that Dan Duncan knew that the mail contained more money than usual.

"Boys," said he, "we must keep a sharp lookout, for I have an idea that we are going to strike something."

"You think them fellers with their skulls over their faces is goin' to bother ther stagecoach, I reckon," answered Charlie.

"I have got it into my head that they will."

"An' if they do we'll jest be around to thin 'em out a bit."

"Yes, and follow them up, if they beat a retreat. We want to find out where they are located."

"Well, we will try hard to do it," declared Jim.

They rode on at a pretty swift pace and at the expiration of fifteen minutes they could hear the rumble of wheels ahead of them.

Then they slowed down and kept along at an even pace with the stagecoach.

This would give them a chance to note a stop if it was made.

The commencement of Death Pass was now pretty close by.

Wild, Charlie and Jim kept a sharp lookout as they neared the place where the holdup had occurred.

The stagecoach was about a hundred yards ahead of them, but as the road was anything but straight there, they could not even catch a glimpse of it.

"Their outfit must be right where it was when it was stopped the day before yesterday," said Cheyenne Charlie.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the rumble of the wheels suddenly ceased.

Wild held up his hand.

His companions nodded.

Then the sound of voices came to their ears.

"Come on, boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "The villains have stopped the stagecoach, I'll bet!"

They dashed forward on a quick gallop, their rifles at their shoulders, ready to open fire at an instant's notice.

The next instant they rounded a bend and came upon a sight that was just what Wild expected to see.

The stagecoach was at a standstill in the road and around it was the masked band.

The villains with their gruesome looking masks had the driver and passengers covered, and one of them was in the act of climbing upon the vehicle to get the mail bags.

"Stop that!" thundered Young Wild West. "Hands up, you scoundrels! The first man who makes a move to run away will die in his tracks!"

The robbers only had revolvers in their hands, and when they saw the rifles levelled at them they broke for cover, notwithstanding the command.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Wild and his two partners each fired a shot.

Three of the villains went down.

Then a volley of revolver shots rang out from the bushes and one of the passengers inside the stagecoach fell back wounded.

But Ned Nippers did not delay.

With the bullets whistling about his head he drove the horses forward at a gallop.

Wild halted when they were within a dozen yards of the spot where the masked villains had last been seen.

He did not want to run into an ambush.

Suddenly he noticed a bush moving well off to the left.

Crack!

He fired a shot at it just to see what it meant.

A yell sounded instantly and then he knew he had not made a mistake.

"You hit one of 'em, Wild!" Cheyenne Charlie called out. "They are sneakin' away to hide somewhere."

"That's right," was the reply in a low tone. "Well, the stagecoach has got away from them; now it is our business to find the scoundrels and put the finishing touches to them. I bought this Overland route, and the stagecoach has got to go through on time as long as I own it."

No more shots were fired, so Wild concluded to dismount and try and locate the villains.

He gave the word and they turned and rode back to a little clump of trees and got off their horses.

"Now, to follow them up," he whispered. "We must be just as careful as though we were on an Indian trail. There is no need of us taking too many chances."

"I reckon we took putty good chances when we rode down here an' made them measly coyotes quit," retorted Cheyenne Charlie.

"Yes, but we had an open chance at that. Now, we don't know just when we will strike them," spoke up Dart.

Leaving their horses under cover of the clump of trees, they started cautiously in the direction they had seen the masked outlaws take.

They soon reached the spot where Wild had shot at the bush.

There was no body there, but there were bloodstains on the leaves and dirt.

Drops could be seen scattered along the ground, too, and one hero suddenly became possessed of an idea.

"I am going straight ahead on the track of the blood," he whispered. "You fellows go to the right and left in a semi-circle and draw in until you meet. We will come pretty close to finding the scoundrels, I think. There can't be any more than seven or eight of them left, and I guess we can attend to them."

His companions nodded.

They always agreed to anything he proposed.

Wild started off, picking his way noiselessly along among the bushes, which were very thick there.

The bloodstains could be seen here and there, showing that

in his hurry to get to cover the wounded man had neglected to try and cover his tracks.

Wild kept on, moving slowly and keeping a sharp watch all around him.

He was of the opinion that the villains had beat a retreat to their hiding place, as he had heard no sounds of horses' hoofs.

Still they might have had their horses at a convenient place, and were waiting in ambush for them to come along and attack them.

One minute later our hero saw that he was nearing the face of a cliff.

"They must have a cave here," he thought.

The drops of blood were more scarce now, and he realized that the wounded villain had stayed the flow somewhat.

Wild crept along and soon he was at the edge of a fringe of bushes.

In order to get any further he would have to emerge into an open spot.

He paused and took in his surroundings.

He could see no signs of a cave in the face of the cliff, and so came to the conclusion that the wounded man must have turned one way or the other.

He decided to take to the right along the edge of the bushes.

He started ahead and was soon at the foot of a sharp ascent.

Just then he happened to glance along the face of the cliff and then it was that he saw what appeared to be an opening right behind a big boulder.

But there was twenty feet between him and the spot and he would have to crawl out into the open to reach it.

He remained perfectly still and listened.

Suddenly he heard the nervous stamp of a horse's hoof.

The sound was smothered, as though it was covered.

The next instant a whinny came to his ears.

This was also smothered, and then Wild knew there was a cave somewhere near him.

He decided to make the attempt to get behind the big rock that was before the place that looked like an opening in the cliff.

Revolver in hand, he stole noiselessly out upon the rough, hard ground and made his way for the objective point.

He got there without making a sound, and just as he saw that he really discovered a cave, a man struck him from behind and knocked the revolver from his hand.

Young Wild West caught a fleeting glance at two men with the skull masks over their faces and then a blanket was thrown over his head and he was choked almost into insensibility.

CHAPTER VIII.

YOUNG WILD WEST IS BURIED ALIVE.

Though Young Wild West had been anticipating danger, he was taken completely unawares.

The man had jumped upon him from behind.

If he had been in front of him he would never have succeeded in accomplishing his purpose.

But the instant Wild's revolver flew from his grasp and he staggered forward, two more of the villains sprang upon him.

A noose was about his neck in an instant, and then a blanket was thrown over his head and he was carried bodily into the cave of the Masked Band.

Not until they got him into the rear of the place, where the gang were, did his captors place Wild on the ground.

Then half a dozen willing hands bound and gagged him.

The blanket was taken from his head and the noose removed from the back of his neck.

The leader of the band, in his hideous disguise, stood before our hero, and he was the first object his eyes rested upon when he was able to see again.

"You are a fine young fellow, Young Wild West," said the scoundrel, laughing mockingly. "You came right to us, didn't you?"

Wild could not speak, but he gave an affirmative nod.

This surprised the seven masked men, who were standing about.

Though they knew the boy was one of the coolest hands they had ever heard of, they were surprised to see him act that way under the present circumstances.

"You are a fine fellow, and a dead shot, so I have heard

say," went on Captain Dark. "I suppose you would like to get a shot at me, wouldn't you?"

Once more Wild nodded in the affirmative.

"Ah! You would, eh? Well, you never will, Young Wild West, for I am going to consign you to a terrible death. Death is the motto of our band, and all those who are opposed to it shall receive death. How do you like that, Young Wild West?"

The boy moved his head to indicate that it made no matter to him.

"Say!" cried the captain, becoming just the least bit angered at the coolness of the prisoner. "Suppose I take the gag out of your mouth! Will you promise not to call out or speak above the tone I am using now?"

Wild nodded assent to this proposition.

"Well, if you fail to keep your word half a dozen knives will be plunged into you in less than a second. You know what is in store for you, now look out!"

With his own hands the villain removed the gag from our hero's mouth.

Wild had no intention of calling out.

He realized only too well that if he did, in all probability the masked scoundrels would kill him on the spot.

He had recovered from the suddenness of the assault on him and he was now himself again.

"Well, you fellows seem to have it in for me," he said looking around at the masked figures. "I suppose you think I hadn't ought to run the Overland route. You should know that if it had not been for me no stages would be running this way, at all. Then you would have had to look elsewhere to make your holdups."

"That may be true, but when we find a fellow who makes his brags that he is going to run a stagecoach through, in spite of the Masked Band of Death Pass, we generally feel like doing something to him. You have succeeded in getting your outfit past us twice, but when the third time comes, look out!"

"Oh! I don't know," and our hero looked around him casually. "There are not as many of you now as there was at the start. I think that by the time we make two or three more trips there won't be any of the Masked Band left."

Captain Dark was quite an adept at disguising his voice, and he succeeded in deceiving Wild right along.

But the last remark of the boy caused him to forget himself, and he spoke in his natural way.

"You will wish you had never seen any of the Masked Band, Young Wild West!" he cried in a rage.

"Ah!" was the cool retort. "I think I have heard that voice before. Just take off that skull rig and let me see if I know you, won't you?"

"Enough of this!" cried the villain. "Men, dig his grave! He has got to die! Death!"

"Death!" answered the men in unison.

"Where'll we dig it, Cap?" asked one of them.

"Anywhere," was the retort. "Dig it where it is the easiest to dig."

The villains got picks and shovels and went over to the corner where they had interred the body of their comrade who was shot by Cheyenne Charlie at the first holdup, and began digging.

Captain Dark walked out to the entrance and found the two men he had left there paying strict attention to business.

They assured him that no one had approached since Young Wild West had been captured.

"Well, his two partners are about somewhere. We must get them both, if possible. Then we will put an end to the game they are working on us."

"We'll git 'em, captain, if you'll jest tell us how," said the taller of the two.

"Go out and take a scout around. Perhaps, you can find them."

"All right."

"Be careful that they don't find you, though."

"You bet I will!"

The leader of the band now walked over to where the horses were.

One of them was doing a great deal of stamping and whinnying, and he did not want so much noise so near the entrance to the cave.

He found that the horse had a foreleg over the halter and he soon straightened things out.

"That noise could have been heard outside, most like'y," he muttered. "I don't see why it is that the men are so

careless, especially when they know that we are being hunted."

He walked back to where the digging was going on and watched the men as they hurriedly threw out the dirt.

"That is deep enough," said he, when he saw that they had got about four feet down. "That will hold Young Wild West, I guess."

"I guess it will do, Cap," retorted his lieutenant, who had been bossing the job.

"Well, let's see how we are going to dispose of Young Wild West before we bury him. We don't want him to make any noise, and we must not do any shooting, either, for that would let his friends know about where he is."

"But they couldn't git in here, even if they did know," spoke up one of the men.

"I know that, but they might go and get a big gang of men and lead them here. Then they might get the best of us after a while."

"I tell you what we might do," said one of them, who had suddenly been hit with an idea.

"Well, what would you suggest, Joe?"

"Bury him alive!"

"Jove! That isn't a bad idea."

"It would serve him jest right. Look at ther men we've lost since he's come here to bother us! One yesterday an' three to-day, an' there's Mike with a bullet in his arm!"

"I guess we will act on your suggestion, Joe."

Young Wild West heard every word that was said.

In spite of his wonderful nerve and pluck, a feeling of horror came over him.

To be buried alive!

It was an awful thing to think of.

One of the men walked up to the helpless form of our hero and put the gag in his mouth.

He strove to say something, but his speech was shut off.

"Fetch him along!" commanded the captain in an icy tone. "The sooner it is over with the better."

Two of the masked men picked the boy up bodily and started for the open grave with him.

They reached the edge and paused for further orders.

"Put him down in it!" exclaimed the heartless leader of the band. "We won't have any ceremony over him. While he is smothering to death he can think of what it is to meddle with a band of men whose motto is Death!"

The two men dropped Wild feet first in the hole.

Then they quickly forced him to lie down.

"All ready, captain!" said one of them.

"Cover him up, then!" was the retort.

Thud!

A shovelful of dirt went upon the breast of Young Wild West!

Thud! Thud!

Two more quickly followed.

Then a couple more of the villains seized shovels and they began to rapidly fill the grave.

That the boy was struggling beneath the dirt they could see, for the earth was moving in waves.

"Jump in on him and pack it down!" cried Captain Dark. One of the men did so.

Then a startled cry left his lips and he disappeared.

The captain rushed to the edge of the grave that Young Wild West had been placed in alive and looked into its depths.

There was nothing to be seen but inky blackness.

The bottom had dropped from the hole!

And not only had Young Wild West disappeared, but one of their men, as well.

The men with the hideous masks stared blankly at each other.

They could not understand it.

"Boys, that is too bad!"

It was the leader of the Masked Band who broke the silence that had come upon them after the last rumble of the falling dirt was heard.

"Young Wild West is gone, but Tim has gone with him!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

Some of the villains actually shivered.

They acted as though a judgment had suddenly been wrought.

"Whisky!" cried the captain. "That will make us feel better, boys!"

They all rushed back into the part of the underground cave where the stuff was kept.

The Chinaman was there busily sorting and brushing some of the clothing of his master.

"Whisky, Pig Eye!" said Captain Dark, speaking in a hoarse voice.

The Chinaman looked at him in a frightened way for a moment, and then hastened to obey the command.

The six villains—for there were only six of them left, besides the two guards, now—were not satisfied with a drink of the fiery beverage apiece.

They did not stop until they had swallowed three or four. Then they became possessed of a little false courage, and with the captain leading them, they went back to the hole.

"One of you fetch me a lariat," said the captain. It was promptly brought to him.

"Now a lantern!" This was also handed to him.

The rascal lighted it, and then tying it to the end of the lariat, leaned over and lowered it down.

When the lantern was down about ten feet it became extinguished.

Captain Dark pulled it up and lighted it again, while the men looked at each other.

He waited until he was certain that it was burning properly and then he let it down again.

But at about the same distance down it went out, causing the black opening to appear blacker than before.

Some of the men stepped back away from the hole. They acted as though they had seen enough of it.

"It ain't no use, Cap," said the lieutenant. "It's all over with poor Tim."

"I guess it is," was the rejoinder. "Get something and cover over the hole."

This was done, the villains using the limbs from a tree which they had brought in to burn.

Then the captain ordered more whisky to be served. When he had taken another bumper he started for the entrance to talk to the guard.

As he neared the place the villain saw that there was no one there.

He hastened forward to see what it meant. Just as he reached the place where he had left the man standing the guard came in.

At least Captain Dark took him for the guard, for it was a man in the full disguise of one of the Masked Band of Death Pass.

"What's the trouble?" asked the captain. "Nothin'," was the reply in a low voice.

The villain gave a start. "There is something the matter!" he exclaimed. "You are not—"

"Shut up!" was the reply, and then the butt of a revolver hit Captain Dark on the head and felled him to the ground.

Then the newcomer seized him by the collar and dragged him out of the cave.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE CAVE.

When Young Wild West was forced to the bottom of the grave he thought surely that his last moment had arrived.

He had been in many tight places before, but this was as bad, if not worse than any of them.

He strove to cry out, but could not do so. Then he struggled with all his might.

But he had been bound securely, and strive as he might, he could not loosen his bonds.

When the dirt began covering him he breathed a silent prayer and then what might have been his death struggle began.

But it was not his death struggle. Suddenly he felt a jar upon him and then he dropped downward.

Down he went in a shower of loosened dirt for about a dozen feet, and then he struck an inclined surface and went sliding away as though he was going down the side of a mountain.

The way was rather rough, too, and before he was hardly aware of it he found that the ropes that tied his hands were severed.

He must have come in contact with a sharp stone to do this, but as near death as he had been, Young Wild West was conscious of what had happened.

When he had slid perhaps fifty feet he came to a stop with a sudden shock.

But the main thing about it all was that he could breathe.

Blinded and almost strangled from the dust, he rolled over until he found himself in a clear spot.

Then he lay perfectly still with his face toward the ground. He was recovering himself.

There seemed to be plenty of air in the place and it was not long before he was sufficiently revived to get at work at the rope that held his ankles together.

It was as dark as a pocket in the underground pit, but that did not deter him from working away.

He felt that his life depended upon his getting free as quickly as possible.

A person in that state can work swiftly, and in less than two minutes he had untied the knot that held him, and then with a sigh of satisfaction, he arose to his feet.

For fear that it might be heard by the villains above, Wild did not make the least noise.

Just as he got upon his feet and had placed himself in a listening attitude he heard a groan right at his feet.

As he had no idea that a man had tumbled down the incline with him, our hero was not a little surprised.

But there was very little that was superstitious about him, and he did not hesitate to stoop down and feel where the groan came from.

When his hands came in contact with the warm body of a man he was not surprised.

"Ah!" he thought. "Some one came down with me, eh? Well, it must have been an accident. Now, to get his weapons the first thing."

It was but the work of a minute for him to find the man's revolver and knife.

And when Young Wild West had them in his hands he felt like a new being.

All thoughts of dying went out of his head like a flash. Another groan came from the man at his feet.

Wild remained perfectly still. Then the figure stirred.

"What's ther matter?" came to his ears in a faint voice. "Shut up!" exclaimed Wild in a whisper. "Make another sound and it will be your last!"

Then a deadly silence reigned. A draught was blowing through the underground place and our hero was not long in becoming conscious of it.

He soon located the direction it came from. Then, leaving the man where he lay, he dropped upon his hands and knees and began crawling along.

Where there was a draught of air there must be an outlet. No one realized this any quicker than Young Wild West.

He had been in similar positions before, so instead of trying to get through the way he came into the underground place, he went along in just the opposite direction.

He soon found that he was proceeding through a natural passage.

He learned this by his shoulders coming in contact with the sides frequently.

Elated at the sudden turn of affairs, he kept right on, feeling his way cautiously.

He was not going to take another fall if he could help it. He was now going upward and that made him think that it would not be long before he got out into the open air.

Two minutes later he saw daylight ahead of him. Then he got upon his feet, finding that he could proceed along by stooping a little.

Wild made for the place where the light came in the passage with hurried steps.

He could now see his way quite clearly. The next minute he reached the outlet of the passage and found himself in a narrow ravine.

"Well, it might have been a great deal worse than this," he mused, as he looked at his hands, which were scratched and bleeding from coming in contact with the sharp rocks in his descent. "I guess I was as near death that time as I ever was before. But Captain Dark, as he calls himself, will suffer for burying me alive. The scoundrel! He is no other than Dan Duncan, the gambler. I would almost stake my life on that!"

Wild soon took his bearings and then he started up the ravine.

The mouth of it was not far distant, so he followed the little brook than ran through it and soon emerged at a point not over twenty yards from the wagon road.

He had not gone far over the road when he was met by Jim Dart.

"Ah! Here you are, eh?" his chum exclaimed. "I guess I must have got lost, for I have been unable to find you or

Charlie until now. I kept on circling, as I thought and finally brought up against the face of a cliff."

"That was right where you should have stayed," Wild answered.

"Why, what do you mean?"

"The entrance to the hiding place of the Masked Band was right there."

"Do you mean that, Wild?" and an incredulous look came over the face of Jim.

"I certainly do mean it. I ought to know, too, since I went in the cave from here."

"You went in the cave? Why, what's the matter with your hands, Wild? You look as though you have had a rough time of it somewhere."

"And so I have had a rough time of it. I was buried alive by the outlaws, Jim. Just think of it—buried alive!"

A blank look came over Jim's face?

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

Wild told him all that had happened in as few words as possible.

Dart was a much surprised boy.

"Gracious!" he cried. "They must be fiends in human form."

"Just to think of it! Burying a person alive!"

"I thought I was gone, Jim."

"I don't wonder."

"It was a merciful Providence that saved me, that's all I can say."

"It was a miracle, that's what it was. If the bottom had not dropped out of the grave you surely would have smothered to death."

"There never was a truer word spoken than that."

"And one of the masked demands fell down into the passage with you, eh?"

"Yes. I left him more dead than alive, I think. I had no time to tarry with him, as I wanted to get out before the outlaws came down to rescue him."

"Well, what do you propose to do now?"

"Let us find Charlie and then we will talk the matter over. I have an idea that we can capture the entire gang. If we can get a shot at the leader it will be easy enough, as he is the only one who seems to have any brains in the lot. Who do you suppose he is, Jim?"

"Who do I suppose he is? Why, I don't know, I am sure."

"Captain Dark, the leader of the Masked Band of Death Pass, is no other than Dan Duncan, the gambler."

"Is that so?"

"If I am any judge of a voice, that is certainly so."

"Well, I am not surprised. I guess we will soon fix up the villains now, then. Your Overland Route is going to travel on time, you can bet!"

"Oh! I never doubted it when I bought the route from Jack Jefferson."

"Well, let's try and find Charlie."

Wild now knew enough of the outlaws to have a good idea of what to do.

He led the way around to the route he had taken to reach the entrance to the cave.

"I'll just bet that I won't be surprised a second time," he whispered to his companion.

"If you do I'll guarantee that my revolver will go off before they get you," declared Jim.

They worked their way cautiously to the edge of the bushes near the face of the cliff.

Then they halted and took a look ahead of them.

Much to their surprise, they saw the body of a man stretched out near the big rock that screened the mouth of the cave.

It was hatless and coatless, and the face being toward them, they easily saw that it was not Cheyenne Charlie.

It was the body of a stranger.

"What does that mean?" whispered Dart.

"It means that Charlie has been at work, I guess," was Wild's reply.

"He caught the guard happing, by the looks of it."

"Yes, but there was two of them."

Wild did not know that Captain Dark had sent one of the men outside the cave.

"Did the guards have their disguises on?"

"Yes."

"Well, that fellow has been relieved of his."

"Perhaps Charlie took it to use."

"That seems probable."

They had not decided exactly what to do when suddenly they heard a noise at the mouth of the cave.

The next instant they saw a masked man come out, dragging another after him. The one who was being dragged was Captain Dark!

Our hero recognized him at a glance.

Then he knew who the other was.

It could be no one else but Cheyenne Charlie in the costume the guard had worn.

Wild and Jim sprang forward.

"Hello, boys!" exclaimed a familiar voice. "Jest gag ther measly coyote. I think he's comin' to."

The two had the outlaw leader in a jiffy.

They dragged him into the bushes and had him bound and gagged just as he opened his eyes.

When he saw Young Wild West bending over him the face of the villain turned ashen.

He was looking upon one who had returned from the grave.

"I am the ghost of Young Wild West, Captain Dark, alias Dan Duncan!" exclaimed our hero in a hollow voice. "The Overland Route is bound to go, but you have got to go to that bourne from whence no traveler ever returns before the stagecoach makes another trip. Boys, we will take him to Buckhorn Bar at once."

"An' leave ther rest of 'em in there?" said Charlie.

"Yes, we can get them any time. They haven't sense enough to go away from here."

"All right. I reckon that none of 'em knows that I colared ther captain. I got him jest too slick for anything. Jest as you say, Wild."

"Well, over to Buckhorn Bar he goes, then. We will let a judge and jury pass a verdict on him. I will tell what he did to me, and I guess that will be sufficient to hang him."

The outlaw leader writhed as though in agony.

They picked him up and carried him to the road without hearing a sound from the cave.

Then the villain was thrown over the back of Wild's horse, and mounting behind him, he led the way toward the mining camp.

It is more than probable that Cheyenne Charlie was in favor of cleaning out the gang, but he never raised any objections to what Young Wild West said.

"If they'll only stay there till we git back," he said.

"I said I thought they did not have sense enough to leave, and I believe it," observed our hero. "They surely believe that I am dead, and they won't know for a certainty what has become of their captain. You may depend upon it that they won't leave the cave until they are forced to."

"Well, we will dispose of their leader first of all, then," said Jim.

They soon reached the town, and when Wild came riding in with the prisoner, there was a great commotion.

CHAPTER X.

THE MASKED BAND GETS INTO A RECKLESS STATE.

Cheyenne Charlie was right when he said that the members of the Masked Band were not aware of what had happened to their leader.

Some of them saw him go to the entrance, and one or two of them saw him talking to the supposed guard.

But when the scout felled the captain every man had his back that way and were walking into the living part of the cave.

Something like ten minutes after the captain was knocked down and dragged from the cave, a strange unearthly noise was heard by the men.

They looked at each other apprehensively and turned pale under their hideous masks.

"Whoo—whoo—!" came to their ears.

"What is it?" said the lieutenant.

The rest of the villains shook their heads.

"What is it, Pig Eye?" addressing the Chinaman this time.

"Man holler, allee samee," was the reply.

The men gave starts of surprise.

It occurred to them that the Chinaman was right.

The second in command hastened out into the other part, followed by the rest.

Just then they heard a voice calling from somewhere beneath them:

"Help! It's me—Tim! I'm down here in ther hole. Git me out!"

"Jerusalem! What do you think of that?" cried the lieutenant. "Where's ther captain, boys?"

"He must have gone outside," answered one of them.

It was at that very moment that the man the captain had ordered to go out and make a little scout around came back.

He came in the cave in a hurry after he saw the dead body of his companion lying on the ground.

"Where's ther captain?" he cried excitedly.

"That's jest what we want to find out," retorted the man in charge.

"Somethin' strange has happened. My partner lays dead on ther ground out there."

"What?" cried the villains in one voice.

"Hurry up! Git me out of here, won't yer? Chuck down a rope. Hurry up!" came from the hole.

The guard looked more surprised than ever.

"It's Tim," said one of the men. "He didn't git killed, after all."

"Well, git him out."

This remark brought them to their senses.

"We don't want any more dead ones; we've had enough of that; an' now ther captain is gone, too," went on the guard. "Git Tim out, an' git him out quick!"

Two of the men pulled the boughs away that covered the hole and another hastened to get a lariat.

The guard took it from him and began to lower it down.

"Ther captain tried to lower a lantern down, but it went out twice," remarked the lieutenant.

"Well, it must have been ther draught that done it. Can't you feel it?"

"Yes, that's so. But what makes a draught come up through ther hole?"

"Now, you've got me. I ain't smart enough to explain that."

He kept on lowering the rope until he got to the end of it.

"Kin you reach it, Tim?" he shouted.

"Wait till I light a match an' see," was the reply. "I think you fellers are ther slowest ones I ever seen. You've putty near worried me to death. Yes, I kin reach ther rope. Now, wait a minute! There! Go ahead. Git me out of this place, boys, as soon as possible."

They soon pulled him up.

The man had lost his skullcap and mask, and as his comrades looked at him they saw that his hair had turned gray.

One of them mentioned the fact to him.

"Well, I guess if you fellers went through what I did yours would turn gray, too," Tim answered. "A little liquor, boys."

His request was granted in a hurry.

When he had swallowed a good horn of the fiery stuff the man felt better.

He sat down on a box and buried his face in his hands for a minute, and then looked up and said:

"Boys, that was awful!"

"I reckon it must have been," the lieutenant admitted, shrugging his shoulders.

"Did you see anything of—of—" one of them started to say.

"Young Wild West, you mean."

"Yes."

"No, I didn't see him, boys, but I felt him. He got untied in some way, an' when I come to he was bendin' over me. He took my weepins from me an' told me if I hollered he'd blow my brains out."

"Then he wasn't dead?" cried the lieutenant.

"Dead? No! Ther dirt wasn't on him long enough to smother him. Ther bottom of ther hole dropped out ther minute I jumped into it to pack it down. I'll never git over that feelin' that come on me when I felt ther dirt give way. It was awful, boys—awful! Give me another drink."

Then the guard brought up the subject of his dead partner and the missing captain.

The members of the Masked Band of Death Pass certainly had lots to worry them just now.

Suddenly one of them looked toward the hole with a start.

"I thought I heard a noise there," he said.

"Young Wild West comin' up!" said another.

"No! He couldn't git up here," and Tim shook his head decisively.

"What are we goin' to do?" asked the lieutenant.

"Well, mebbe ther captain has just gone out to take a scout around, like I did," observed the guard. "I didn't find out anything, but mebbe he will. Jest wait a while, an' if nothin' don't turn up we'll have to elect some one to act as a leader till he does come back."

"Ain't I ther lieutenant?" spoke up the man who was called the captain's assistant.

"Well, if you are, why don't you tell us what to do, then?" one of the boys cried.

"Boys, I don't know what to tell you to do."

"That's jest it!" exclaimed the guard. "You ain't a fit man fer ther position you hold."

"I'm fitter nor you are!" was the angry retort.

"I don't believe yer!"

The lieutenant walked over to the guard with flashing eyes.

He had swallowed enough of the whisky to make him dangerous.

"I'm boss here till ther captain gits back. You set down, or I'll knock yer down."

Whack!

The guard made a quick swing with his right fist and caught the angry man squarely between the eyes.

Then a free fight ensued, for the two were about equally divided as to friends.

Masks and skullcaps were knocked off and more than one nose got to bleeding.

The only one who did not take part in it was Tim, the man whose hair had turned white in a few short minutes.

He sat on the box he had taken as a seat and watched them.

When he thought it had gone about far enough he interfered.

"Boys, you're makin' fools of yourselves. At ther very time you oughter be workin' together in harmony you're fightin' among yourselves. Where are we all goin' to land if this keeps up?"

His words had great effect upon the angered men.

They cooled down instantly.

"What are you goin' to do about it, anyhow?" cried Tim, jumping to his feet and waxing eloquent. "Are we goin' to stay in here an' do nothin'? Somethin's got to be done, boys. We mustn't let Young Wild West's partners come here an' shoot us down like rats in a trap. They know where ther cave is, or else they wouldn't have killed my pard, who was on guard. A couple of you jest git out there by the entrance an' keep a watch. Somethin's got to be done."

It was remarkable to see how they accepted the man as a leader.

He was the first to offer a suggestion, and they took to it right away.

"There's eight of us, observed one of the villains, as he counted them.

"Eight!" echoed another. "I don't see but seven."

"Ain't ther Chinaman one?"

"Oh! Well, if you count him."

"Of course we'll count him. An' when ther captain gits back, there'll be nine of us."

"Nine agin two!" exclaimed Tim. "Young Wild West will never git out of ther hole down there. He'll starve to death!"

"Funny he ain't done some hollerin' to try an' make his friends hear him, though, ain't it?" remarked a fellow, who was busy wiping the blood from his nose.

"He'll do that after he finds he's got no chance to git out. You jest wait! You'll hear him yellin' all kinds of tunes afore long."

"How was it he didn't stop you from bein' hauled up?" queried the guard, who had come out of the fight without a scratch.

"Didn't I tell yer that he went off somewhere in ther cave that's down there?"

"Well, if that's ther case, mebbe he's found another way to git out."

"That's so!" and then the men looked at each other anxiously.

Two men had stationed themselves as guards and the rest went back to where the liquor was and sat down.

The Chinaman had been testing some of the stuff while they were in the front of the cave, and he was just ready for almost anything.

"Give us some whisky, Pig Eye!" exclaimed Tim. "Take a drink yourself, too."

"Allee lightec; Pig Eye bc alle samee dlunkee likee Melican man!" was the reply.

Then all hands proceeded to fill in on the stuff, regardless of what might happen afterward.

They were worried and they wanted something to keep up their spirits.

And as long as their captain was not there they would do about as they pleased.

But Tim was now looked upon as their leader.

Even the guard, who had started the row, seemed to be satisfied to this.

An hour passed by.

The villains in the cave got to enjoying themselves just as though nothing had happened, and they were as safe as could be.

The Chinaman was pretty well filled with whisky by this time and they had him dancing and singing regardless of the noise it made.

The two men who had been placed on guard at the entrance got tired of staying there and came back to have some of the fun that was going on.

Soon they were as much intoxicated as any of the rest.

They kept up the orgie until noon, and then some of them were completely overcome by the liquor they had swallowed.

It was just about this time that a horse galloped up to the entrance of the cave.

The rider dismounted and led the animal inside.

It was Captain Dark.

A couple of the drunken gang were singing at the time, and they paid not the least attention to his arrival.

"What is the matter here?" cried the captain. "Have you all gone crazy?"

"Hello!" exclaimed Tim, staggering forward to meet him. "I'm ther leader now. How do you do, old boy?"

The man's whitened hair and his face bloated from the whisky he had imbibed made him look strange and unnatural to the leader of the band.

Involuntarily he took a step backward.

"Is it you, Tim!" he asked.

"Yes, it is me, Cap! I didn't git killed. I've been ther leader of ther gang while you was away. How are you, anyhow? Let's have a nice sociable drink together."

Captain Dark pushed him rudely aside.

Then he dashed in among the men and began kicking them right and left.

Some got upon their feet, but the most of them were too drunk to have any feeling.

"Get up!" he shouted. "In less than ten minutes Young Wild West will be here!"

But this remark had little or no effect upon them.

The Chinaman lay across a table, dead to the world, and becoming exasperated, the leader of the band rushed over and seized him.

"You yellow-faced fool!" he cried. "You had to get drunk, too, did you? Well, I'll fix you."

He started in to shake him when Tim struck him a blow with his fist that felled the captain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MASKED BAND IS RUN DOWN.

Young Wild West told the men at the tavern what had happened in a very few words.

The few miners who were gathered there were surprised beyond measure.

"So Dan Duncan an' ther leader of the Masked Band of Death Pass is one an' ther same person, hey?" cried the landlord. "Well, I reckon that's a funny thing, boys."

"'Tain't so awful surprisin', either, when you come to think of it," said a miner. "I always thought he wasn't no good."

Tom Mullick, the mayor, was sent for and when he got there he asked Wild what was the best thing to do with the outlaw leader.

"Give him a fair trial," was the reply. "Lock him up till noon, when there will be plenty of the miners here to select a jury from. You are the mayor, so you can act as judge."

"Well, if I am goin' to be ther judge, why can't I pass sentence on ther galoot now? It won't take me half a second to say that he's got to have his neck stretched."

"Well, it would be better to wait. The men would like to have a say in the matter, you know. There is no need of making them quit their work now, so we'll wait until they come home to get their dinners."

"All right, Young Wild West; jest as you say."

Captain Dark was hustled off to the shanty that was used for a jail and placed in it.

He was left securely bound and the door was locked.

Then the mayor appointed a man to guard the jail.

The fellow he appointed was Big Eph, the miner Wild had tamed shortly after his arrival at Buckhorn Bar.

As might be supposed, this man had no particular love for our hero.

But he was afraid of him, and he had acted very friendly.

Big Eph had always been a pretty decent sort of a citizen.

But he was one of the sort who can easily be turned from good to bad.

He got it into his head that Young Wild West was taking a whole lot on himself in the way of running things in the town.

When he was selected to watch the prisoner in the jail a thought struck him that he now had a chance to get square with Young Wild West.

Suddenly he heard the voice of the prisoner say:

"My friend, I will give you a thousand dollars if you will let me out of here!"

"Wha-a-t!" stammered Big Eph. "Why, I'd get killed if I done that."

"No, you wouldn't. It can be done so it will look as though you knew nothing about it."

"Tell me how."

Captain Dark was talking through a rather wide crack near the corner of the shanty on the side opposite to the tavern.

"I'll tell you how. I'll roll over so my hands will be on either side of this crack. When I give the word, you run the blade of your knife through and cut the rope that my wrists are tied with. Then you just walk up and down in front of the jail and I will do the rest."

"An' you'll give me a thousand dollars if I do as much as that?"

"Yes, I'll stick it through the crack as soon as you cut my hands loose. If I don't keep my word you can easily stop my escape."

Big Eph thought a minute.

He wanted to get square with Young Wild West and he needed money very badly.

It occurred to him that if he could manage it without being found out he would be way ahead of the game.

"I'll do it!" he exclaimed.

"All right!" was the reply in a tone of delight. "Now, just walk around and take a look at the crack. It is the widest one here and quite close to the floor."

The guard obeyed.

"I see it," he answered.

"Well, when I give you the word stick the blade of your knife through, edge toward the corner and saw a few times. It is an easy thing to do."

"I reckon it is."

He paced back and forth a couple of times and then the voice of Captain Dark called out:

"I'm all ready!"

"All right. Here she goes! But you mustn't say that I done this if you happen to git caught."

"I'll never breathe it, my friend."

Big Eph inserted the blade of his knife in the crack and felt along until he struck something.

Then he sawed a couple of times and an exclamation of satisfaction came from within.

"I'm loose!" said the captain. "Now, as soon as I get my ankles untied I'll shove the money through the crack. I've got it in bills."

A few minutes later he did as he promised.

"How are you goin' to git out?" queried the rascally miner, as he pocketed the money.

"Through the window. It will be easy enough to do. You are not supposed to hear the noise I make."

"Sartin I ain't."

"Where is the nearest horse to this shanty?"

"There's a couple of 'em in ther shed right behind ther shanty on ther right as you git out of ther winder," replied Big Eph.

"Well, I will take one of them, then. I'll ride away a little slow until I get to the cover of the pines. Then I won't be afraid of them catching me. No one is paying any particular attention to the jail, are they?"

"Nope! They're all gone inside at ther tavern."

"Good! Now for the window."

It was quite an easy matter for the villain to open the ramshackle affair.

It was not a jail that was calculated to hold a prisoner unless he was securely bound, anyhow.

Big Eph heard the noise the outlaw made quite plain, but

he had the thousand dollars now, and that was sufficient to make him feel good.

Just when the prisoner got out he did not know, but he heard a horse going away a few minutes later, and he walked back and forth, keeping an eye on the front of the tavern.

But there was no one outside, and the postmaster sat dozing on the stoop of the supply store not far distant.

There was a pretty good argument going on inside the tavern, as Big Eph could tell by the voices.

Presently he saw the mayor come out, followed by Young Wild West and his partners and the rest of the crowd.

They all headed for the shanty jail, too.

Big Eph was very uneasy, but he put on a bold front.

"Eph," said the mayor, "we've decided to notify ther whole town an' git all ther men here, so we kin try ther captain of ther Masked Band at once. Young Wild West was jest goin' to start off to git ther rest of ther gang, an' I'm goin' with him. It sorter struck me that it would be safer to hang ther galoot that's been makin' things so hot on ther trail that runs through Death Pass afore we went away. It might be that he'll induce you to let him go, you know. You ain't got a great deal of money, an' ther chances is that Dan Duncan has got a pile of it in his clothes."

The rascally guard turned all colors when this remark was made.

Our hero noticed it, but he did not dream of such a thing as the prisoner having already made his escape.

Tom Mullick unlocked the door.

"I reckon we'll take another look at him," he said. "Here! A couple of you fellers hustle around an' give ther word to ther boys. There's goin' to be a first-class lynchin', tell 'em, an' I reckon they'll about all be here inside of twenty minutes."

Two of the miners started off to obey the command and the mayor threw open the door.

The first thing that met his eyes was the open window.

"Jumpin' catfish!" he cried. "What's this? Ther galoot ain't here!"

"What!" cried Young Wild West, darting into the shanty.

The rest crowded to the door, Big Eph doing the same and acting his part pretty well.

"He's gone, sure enough!" said Wild, coolly. "Come, boys! We'll go back to Death Pass in a hurry."

Charlie and Jim hastened to get the horses, and while they were gone Wild and the mayor discovered the fact that a horse was missing from the next shanty.

Our hero also discovered something else.

It was the piece of rope that had been cut.

One of them stuck through the crack.

He pulled it out and placed it in his pocket unobserved by anybody.

But he did not say anything just then, though he readily understood that it was Big Eph who had aided the villain to escape.

Some of the miners who had horses wanted to go along, so he gave his consent.

A few minutes later they were riding swiftly along the road that led to Death Pass.

There were seven in the party—Wild and his two partners and the mayor and three of the miners.

All were well armed and ready for business.

They were not more than ten minutes behind Captain Dark, so he had made no mistake when he told the drunken gang that in ten minutes Young Wild West would be there.

When they finally came in sight of the pass they had lost no time.

Wild held up his hand when he neared the place where he wanted them to dismount and they promptly slowed down their horses.

"Dismount!"

The command was given in a low tone.

All hands obeyed, and then our hero turned to them and said:

"I will go ahead first and see if the scoundrel really came back here. It might be that he rode off somewhere else, you know."

"All right," answered the mayor. "Jest fire a shot when you want us."

Young Wild West crept cautiously to the entrance of the cave.

The body of the man Cheyenne Charlie had killed lay where it had fallen.

That showed that the villains had not come out.

But had Captain Dark come back? That was the question.

The daring boy took the chance of creeping around the big rock.

Then he heard voices.

Some were singing, some were wrangling and others were chattering in a maudlin way.

Wild quickly understood the situation.

The scoundrels had taken to drink and had overdone the matter.

Then he saw two men dragging the body of another toward the hole that had been dug for a grave for him.

He crept softly through the entrance and got inside.

The body was that of Tim.

As soon as Captain Dark recovered from the blow the man gave him he had pulled his revolver and shot him.

Since that time they had been having a high old time of it.

Though some of the villains had not liked the idea of the captain shooting Tim, they did not offer to resent it.

And now they were about to consign the body to the place where the man had fallen when he jumped into the grave to pack the dirt over Young Wild West.

Wild lay close to the wall of the cave in a shadow and waited to see what they would do.

The covering was removed from the hole, and then with a one, two, three, they let the remains of Tim go down.

"That's the end of him, the poor fool!" our hero heard Captain Dark say. "Now, boys, we must get ready to put up a fight. Young Wild West is not far away from here, you can bet!"

"That's right, you fiend!" cried our hero, springing to his feet with a revolver in either hand. "Surrender, or it will all be up with you in another second!"

The face of the outlaw captain turned the color of ashes.

Then he slowly raised his hands above his head.

But not so with the man nearest to him.

This fellow was just reckless enough from the whisky he had imbibed to put up a fight.

Pulling an ugly looking knife from his belt, he leaped forward to plunge it into Wild's breast.

But then a shot rang out and the villain dropped.

The echoes of the shot had scarcely died away when Cheyenne Charlie came rushing in, followed by the rest who had remained outside.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"I guess you know whether the Overland Route is going to be a success or not now!" exclaimed Young Wild West, as he stepped up to the leader of the Masked Band of Death Pass and took his weapons from him. "Captain Dark, you were not nearly so smart as you thought you were. I haven't forgotten that you buried me alive!"

"You will find that I will die game, Young Wild West!" was the reply. "If it had not been that my men got drunk I would have showed you who would have triumphed. It was an easy matter for you to get in here and take us by surprise. I have not a man here who can walk across the cave without falling down. Oh! This is a great victory for you, Young Wild West! A lot of drunken fools to contend with."

While the prisoners were being fixed so they could be taken to the town the scout was at work marking some letters on a smooth piece of board he had found.

They were all ready and waiting for him when he got through.

"I've made a sign to put up in Death Pass," Charlie said with a grin. "Shall I read it to you?"

"Certainly. Go ahead," answered our hero.

"All right. Here's what it says:

"Notice—Death Pass is all right to travel through now. Ther Masked Band have been cleaned out by Young Wild West an' his pards. P. S.—When you travel this way go by Young Wild West's Overland Route."

Wild and Jim laughed heartily at this.

"That's what I call good, Charlie," declared Dart. "Put it up, by all means."

The scout took the sign into the pass and fastened it to a tree.

Then he stood off and read it over again.

"That can't be beat, if I do say it myself," he observed, as he mounted his horse.

Captain Dark was silent during the ride back to town.

The Chinaman and two of the others lay asleep on their horses' necks.

It was a queer looking cavalcade that filed into Buckhorn Bar and halted in front of the tavern.

The miners had not gone to work, and they were waiting patiently.

"We've got ther whole kit an' boodle of 'em, boys!" yelled the mayor as he dismounted. "Hooray fur Young Wild West!"

The cheers that went up were loud and long.

Our hero simply bowed and then went upon the stoop of the tavern.

He saw Big Eph there, and he wanted to say something to him.

"Got any money?" he asked.

"A little," retorted the rascal, turning red.

"Well, treat the boys, then."

Wild was satisfied that the miner had given Captain Dark his liberty, and that being the case, he was pretty sure that he had not done it for nothing.

Several of the men, hearing the conversation, crowded around them.

Among them was the mayor.

He seemed surprised to hear Young Wild West coaxing a man to treat.

It was rather out of place for him to do such a thing as that.

Charlie and Jim knew there was something up and they simply kept still and awaited developments.

"I tell you I ain't got enough money to treat," Big Eph insisted.

Wild put his hand in his pocket as though he was going to give him some and pulled out the piece of rope that had been cut.

"What is that?" he asked, handing it to the rascal.

A deathly pallor came over his face.

"I don't know what you're drivin' at!" he cried.

"Yes, you do. How much did Captain Dark pay you to cut him loose?"

"Why, I didn't cut him loose. You don't s'pose I'd do a thing like that, do yer?"

"What is the use of crawling out of it, you sneaking coward?" spoke up the leader of the Masked Band. "I gave you a thousand dollars to cut me loose. There's no need of being so mealy-mouthed about it."

This was the last straw and Big Eph gave way under the load.

An ominous murmur went up from the miners when they heard that Big Eph had been so treacherous.

Doubtless they would have made it warm for him if Young Wild West had not interfered.

"Boys," he said, getting upon a chair, "it is all right, the way it has turned out, so there is no need of lynching Big Eph for what he did. He has got a thousand dollars, which is probably more than he ever had at one time before. Now, then, I propose that he be given twenty minutes to get out of town!"

Shouts of approval went up at this, though there were some who were in favor of hanging the rascal as an accomplice of the Masked Band.

Wild argued the question a few minutes and carried the day.

"Big Eph," he said to the man, "I didn't think much of you when I first met you. I now think less of you, but am giving you the chance of your life. Any man who will let a notorious outlaw chief out of jail for the insignificant sum of a thousand dollars will do worse. But I warn you that if I ever run across you and find anything crooked about you, you will go under quicker than a rope around your neck could do it. You need not treat the crowd, so you will be that much ahead. Light out, now!"

It had the desired effect all right, and that was the last Buckhorn Bar ever saw of Big Eph.

A few minutes later the mayor started in to draw a jury to try the prisoners.

Of course, this was a farce, but they went at it in a rather systematic way, just the same.

Sometimes the wrong man suffered, but in this case he was not going to.

The verdict was rendered immediately, and, of course, it was "Guilty!"

Young Wild West and his partners went into the tavern to dinner while the executions were taking place.

Suffice it to say that the miners made short work of the business.

Wild and his partners took things easy about the town for the next couple of days.

They were going to stay until the stagecoach started out for Stony Flats again.

Then they would leave Buckhorn.

Wild was anxious to sell the route, but there seemed to be no one in the town who cared for it.

But when the stagecoach came in it brought a man who came over for the express purpose of buying it.

His name was Johnson.

He was a big, raw-boned cattle raiser and was willing to run the chances of being held up by the Masked Band, he said.

But in coming through the pass the driver had noticed Cheyenne Charlie's sign, and he halted to allow the passengers to read it.

"Humph!" exclaimed Johnson. "That sounds mighty big. I reckon Young Wild West ain't ther only one as could have done all that, if it was done."

"You will find out that he kin do about anything he tries to, mister," said Ned Nippers, the driver.

"Well, I'm goin' to buy ther Overland Route from him, but he's got to sell it to me at my price."

When the stagecoach pulled into Buckhorn Bar it was right on time.

Johnson asked for Young Wild West the first thing and the driver sought him out and introduced him.

"I s'pose you want to sell ther Overland Route, don't yer? Jefferson said as how he thought you'd git tired of it putty quick," he said, coming to the point.

"Yes," answered Wild, "I will sell."

"How much do you want?"

The figure was named by our hero and the big cattle raiser gave a gasp.

"That's putty nigh three times what you gave Jefferson fur it," he said.

"Well, that is the figure I will sell for. I am not asking any more than it is worth, either."

"Yes, you are. You think you'll play me fur a sucker, but you won't. I'll give you jest a hundred dollars more'n what you paid Jefferson."

"No, my friend, I guess we can't do business together."

"We can't, hey? What do you think I am?"

"I don't know what you are, nor I don't care what you are. You can't buy my Overland Route now—not at any price. I am not in the habit of being bulldozed, and I advise you to haul in your horns right away, or you'll wish you had."

"What!" roared Johnson. "You young whipper-snapper, you! Dare to talk to me that way, do yer. I'll box yer ears fur yer!"

He made an effort to do so and then Young Wild West let him have a blow in the chest that sent him staggering backward.

"Keep away from me, Mr. Johnson," he said. "If you don't I will hurt you!"

"Hurt me!" yelled the big man in a rage. "Hurt me! Why, ther man ain't born what kin do that, let alone a boy, like you! I'll jest wipe up ther ground with yer!"

He made a dive for Wild and would surely have kept his word if he hadn't dodged.

Then our hero let himself out and in just one minute he had Johnson down and out.

"Now, my friend," said he, beckoning to Ned Nippers to come over, "I'll show you what I am going to do with my Overland Route. I am going to make the whole thing a present to my driver. Ned, the Overland Route is yours—horses, stagecoach and the whole business. I hope you have the greatest of luck with it."

"Yer don't mean that, do yer, Young Wild West?" cried the driver, tears of joy starting to his eyes.

"I certainly do," was the reply. "Perhaps I wouldn't have given the business away if it hadn't been for Johnson. But I can afford to give it away, and I think you are just the man for it. I'll have the papers drawn up right away."

Our hero was as good as his word, and when the stagecoach went out on the next trip the owner was driving it and the man who had been anxious to own it was inside.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S IRON GRIP; or, SETTLING A COWBOY FEUD."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE

CURRENT NEWS

Through some clever work on the part of the customs secret service men 199 cans of opium hidden in the staves of barrels containing lamp blacking were seized the other day and the would-be importer and his assistants were arrested. As the staves of the barrels were rather thick just in the center instead of being hollowed, the smugglers had carved out a small sort of pocket large enough to contain a narrow can of opium in each stave. When the staves were set together it was impossible to see these openings.

Twelve persons decided to lunch together every day and agreed not to sit in the same order. One of the number, a mathematician, surprised his associates by informing them that their decision meant that one and one-third million years must elapse before they would again be seated in the original order. Two men can sit together only in two different ways, three in six ways, four in twenty-four, five in 120, six in 720, seven in 5,040, eight in 40,320, nine in 362,888, ten in 3,628,800, eleven in 39,916,800 and twelve in 479,100,600.

To prevent Scranton, Pa., from caving into the abandoned subterranean caverns cut beneath it by coal miners a local inventor suggests filling the mines with ice, the slow glacierlike movement of which he considers would cause it to be packed solidly so as to form a substantial foundation for the town. Although at the outset much of the ice would melt, says Popular Mechanics, the inventor contends that the melting would cease as quickly as the surrounding ground became thoroughly chilled. Furthermore, the packing would be done in the winter.

The battleships Texas, Arkansas, Wyoming and New York of the Atlantic arrived at New York recently from short-range target practice off the Virginia Capes. The Texas, officers said, not only upheld her position as holder of the gunnery trophy and battle efficiency pennant, but broke her record of last year. Some of her 14-inch gun pointers never had missed a target since the ship went into commission two and a half years ago. The crews of one 14-inch turret and of three 5-inch guns were awarded the Navy E for their exceptional work. The men have \$6,000 prize money divided among them. The sailors attribute the success of the Texas to their mascot, Buster, a Boston bull terrier, which was sent to the ship with regular enlistment papers when the Iowa was sold to Greece.

Members of the jewelry trade learned with keen satisfaction recently that the Government will hereafter permit the importation of diamonds, pearls,

and precious stones by mail, either in registered or unregistered packages, sealed or unsealed. Official word of this decision, which materially modifies the Underwood tariff regulations, was received from the Post Office Department at Washington by the American Jewelers' Protective Association of 452 Fifth Avenue. "The step is an important one to jewelry importers," said Mr. Rothschild, "because it is the first time in the memory of the trade that dutiable goods were permitted to be received on importation in sealed and registered packages. The promptness with which the Postmaster General has acted on the matter speaks highly for the willingness of the Administration to do all that it reasonably can for the benefit of American commerce.

A curious plant growing in Peru is known to the native as "Yareta," or "vegetable sheep." It grows abundantly among rocks at high altitudes along the Andes of Bolivia and Peru, where it constitutes a conspicuous feature in the landscape because of its peculiar manner of developing the so-called "poister," or cushion formation. The "yareta" forms hillocks or small mounds often three feet high and sometimes several feet in diameter, says Popular Science Monthly. Moreover, the entire mound is made up of a single plant, not of a colony of individuals, and it attains its enormous size and extreme compactness by a process of repeated branching, so that the ultimate branches are closely crowded and the outer surface is continuous. The flowers of the "yareta" are very thin, only about one-eighth of an inch long, and are borne in small clusters near the tips of the branches. The fruit resembles a miniature caraway seed. The natives use the plant as fuel.

Vito Cestone of New Rochelle, N. Y., and a member of the Century Road Club Association, has established a new bicycling road record between New York City and Boston, Mass., by doing the distance in eighteen hours. Cestone started from New York City Hall at 12:01 a. m. Friday morning, September 29, and reached Boston City Hall at 6:01 p. m. the same day. The total mileage recorded was 247, of which the last forty-nine miles were ridden in the great rainstorm that broke over the East on Friday. Loftus of Providence has the best previous mark, 18 hours and 26 minutes. The schedule of Cestone's ride was as follows: September 29—New York City, 12:01 a. m.; New Rochelle, 1:06 a. m.; Stamford, Conn., 2:20 a. m.; Bridgeport, Conn., 3:47 a. m.; New Haven, Conn., 5:05 a. m.; Meriden, Conn., 6:55 a. m.; Hartford, Conn., 7:55 a. m.; Thompsonville, 9:18 a. m.; North Wilbraham, Mass., 10:34 a. m.; Warren, Mass., 12:03 p. m.; Worcester, Mass., 1:46 p. m.; Boston, Mass., 6:01 p. m.

MR. WALL OF WALL STREET

OR

The Man Who Came from the Klondike

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XV (Continued).

Fred could never tell whether he actually fainted or not, but when he was able to pull himself together there stood Mr. Wall, looking down at him in a confused way.

"Why, it's Fred!" he exclaimed. "How came you here? How came I here? What does it all mean?"

Fred scrambled up and faced him, half expecting another blow.

Oh, if Dick Ditchett would only come!

But the detective was nowhere to be seen.

"Mr. Wall, what ails you?" Fred gasped. "Do you know where you were just now?"

"Yes, asleep in my room. Why am I here?"

"You were lying on that track with a train coming. You would have been cut to pieces if I hadn't pulled you off."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Don't you remember the house being on fire? Don't you know I chased you over the lots?"

"Indeed! Then it was not all a dream. Do you know I thought I had dreamed that. Oh, well, it makes no odds. The fire couldn't have burned me, for I am made of gold. As for the train, I'm glad it didn't hit me, for it would probably have been thrown from the track by striking so solid a substance as I am, and there would have been lives lost. I don't know what makes me fall down unconscious that way, but I have done so several times of late."

"He's hopelessly mad," thought Fred. "If I can only persuade him to go back now, we are sure to meet Ditchett. He must be somewhere around."

"Come, Mr. Wall," he said aloud. "Let's go back to the house and see it burn."

"No," replied the banker. "No, Fred. I don't care to see the house burn if it is really on fire, and I am willing to take your word for that. Besides, I have business with you here."

"Business, sir?"

"Yes. I am very glad I met you. I have been intending to write to you for some days, but the fact is I haven't been very well."

"Why don't you come home with me, sir?" said Fred gently. "This wandering about in these lonely places is telling on your health."

"No, oh, no! It's not that at all, Fred. The reason I fall is probably on account of my great weight.

You see, I'm made of gold. You can't realize it, but it is nevertheless a fact."

The case seemed hopeless.

Oh, if Dick Ditchett would only come!

"And now, Fred," continued the banker, "I'm going to give you some more of those gold notes. I have just finished making a fresh batch of them. Here they are, my boy!"

And Mr. Wall produced from his inside coat pocket a big bundle of yellow bills.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK OF THE GANG.

"Take them, Fred," said Mr. Wall, handing over the bundle of yellow bills. "They are all yours. I made them on purpose for you. There are more this time. I think you will find about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars there. I shall soon make you another lot."

Fred needed no second invitation to close on the bills. He had had experience with that sort of counterfeit money before.

Mr. Wall watched him stow the bills away with evident satisfaction.

"That's right! That's right!" he muttered. "We all want to make money, all want to make money."

Then, as if forgetting all he had said before, he suddenly exclaimed:

"By the way, Fred, how did you come out in your stock speculations?"

"Fine!" replied Fred, heartily, "and much obliged to you."

"Oh, don't mention it; any little thing like that I am glad to do to help my friends along, and you are about the only friend I've got now, Fred. Sometimes we can give those points and sometimes we can't. We see 'em in the air, you know. Ha! I see one now! It's a mine up in the far north—all snow, boy, all snow! I am there working it. I am digging out gold to beat the band, and all I dig out I give to you. Ha! Ha! Isn't that great? It's my finish, though, for now I see myself lying dead."

"Dead, Mr. Wall?"

"Yes, sir! Dead! Come, I don't like that."

"I should say not. Perhaps it won't come true, though."

"No fear of that. Whatever I say comes true. But no matter. We must all die, so where's the odds, as long as you are happy, and I never was so happy in all my life. Ha! Some one coming. I must be off."

It was Dick Ditchett at last!

Words fail to express how thankful Fred felt to see him.

The detective was running down the track full speed.

"I must be going," said the banker, nervously. "I don't like to meet strangers in these days."

"Stay, Mr. Wall. This gentleman is a particular friend of mine," urged Fred.

"Is he?"

"Sure he is."

"I don't care much about meeting him, but if he is your friend that makes a difference; but say, don't tell him anything about the money, Freddy; that's a good boy."

"Not a word!" cried Fred, and he meant it, too.

"It's none of his business how much money I get out of this man," he thought. "If anyone is to tell him it must be Jack Silver himself."

"You won't ask him to stay with you long?" continued Mr. Wall. "I can't do that."

"That will be all right," replied Fred, hastily. "Brace up now, Mr. Wall. Here he comes."

Dick Ditchett slowed down as he approached; he seemed to realize the necessity of approaching the banker quietly; almost to read Fred's mind, as it were, for when he came up to them he simply said:

"Oh, how are you, Fred? What are you doing away out here?"

"Why, Dick, how do you do?" replied Fred, shaking hands. "Let me introduce you to my employer, Mr. Wall."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Wall!" cried Dick Ditchett. "I've heard Fred say a lot about you."

He extended his hand, but the banker drew back.

"Excuse me," he said. "I never shake hands with strangers. My hand is made of gold, and some of it might rub off."

"Exactly so," replied the detective, laughing. "I should not want gold to rub off on my hand. I wouldn't know what it meant."

"Gold is not for everyone, Mr. Ditchett," said the banker, solemnly.

"It's not for me, at all events," answered Ditchett. "But say, it's rather cold here. Which way are you bound, Fred?"

"Why, it's like this," said Fred. "Mr. Wall's house has just burned and he is going down into Williamsburg with me. He doesn't care to go to my house, so we are going to look up a room together. Isn't that so, Mr. Wall?"

"I didn't say so," replied the banker, looking askance at Dick Ditchett, "but on the whole, I don't know but what it will be a good idea for to-night."

"I think it's a splendid idea," said the detective. "We'll walk right along the track here till we come to the Grand street bridge."

Fred put his arm through Mr. Wall's, and with a quiet "Come, sir, we will go now," started.

Mr. Wall made no objection, and Dick Ditchett wisely dropped behind.

Evidently his wild life in the lots had given the old man strength, for he walked with a firmer step and held himself more erect than Fred had ever seen him do.

"If we can only get him in somewhere," thought Fred. "I suppose we shall have to land him in the station house, but I wish there was some other way."

He had expected all kinds of trouble from Mr. Wall, but the banker made none.

For some distance he walked on in silence, and Dick Ditchett held his tongue.

"Is that man still behind us?" whispered Mr. Wall, as they came in sight of the Grand street bridge.

"Yes, he is," replied Fred. "You need not be afraid of him."

"I'm not afraid of him, but I don't like him."

"Oh, Dick is a good fellow."

"That may be, but all the same, I don't like him. I wish we were alone."

"You will take a room with me, Mr. Wall?"

"Perhaps. I haven't decided yet."

"You can teach me how to make those gold notes, you know."

"I could, but I won't. That is my secret, and I am not going to give it away to any one."

"Well, you shan't if you don't want to."

"We'll see, Fred. We'll see. I wish that man would go about his business, though."

"He won't do you any harm, believe me, Mr. Wall."

"I wish the detective would take him," thought Fred. "He is getting more and more nervous. There is going to be trouble soon."

But things were to all appearances going so smoothly that Dick Ditchett could scarcely be blamed for letting matters stand as they were.

And he might have succeeded in landing his man in the nearest station house but for an incident which was now about to occur.

Of course, no car came along when they struck Grand street, so Fred kept on across the bridge, and they soon came abreast of the ash dumps.

Just as they were passing a small factory which stood on their left, four men suddenly sprang out and stepped in front of them.

One was Pete Gleason, and his friend Mr. Dabney was with him. The other two were strangers to Fred.

"Hold on there!" cried Pete. "So you've got him. Dat's good. Hold de old guy, fellers. We'll go troc him now!"

(To be continued.)

FACTS WORTH READING

COYOTE HUNTING IN AUTO.

Coyote hunting by automobiles at night is the latest diversion on the San Fernando Boulevard, Los Angeles, Cal. Recently Deputy Sheriffs Cooper and Sweeney saw a large coyote dash from the roadside into the glare of the machine's headlights.

Then ensued a race between the animal and the machine.

Blinded by the glare of the lights the coyote dashed at top speed down the boulevard ahead of the machine until the automobile in a sudden burst of speed ran over and killed the animal.

GOES 3,000 MILES TO WED.

Not the call of the North but the more potent call of the little blind god is taking Miss Lolita Elsemore, a blue-eyed daughter of Aberdeen, Wash., on a 3,000-mile journey into the heart of Alaska.

There, as a result of a romance that began several years ago in the southwestern Washington town, she will be led to the altar by C. Herbert Wilson, one of the prominent young civil engineers of the staff of the Alaska Engineering Commission.

Wilson has his headquarters in Fairbanks and the young couple will make their home in that city. Wilson is a former Lincoln High School student and a football player.

PROFIT BY RAISING GUINEA PIGS.

Carl Weiss, fourteen, son of Otto Weiss, a contractor at Evansville, Ind., has proved that raising guinea pigs for experimental clinics is profitable. Weiss has a guinea pig farm in the rear yard of his home.

Weiss operates his farm on a systematic basis. Everything is kept clean and sanitary and the pigs are housed in boxes with plenty of ventilation.

In addition to being the caretaker and breeder of the animals, Weiss acts as crater, shipper and carpenter, and when he gets an order for pigs he makes his own boxes for shipment. Before he began to raise guinea pigs, he was a chicken fancier and had many prize game fowls.

FIREMEN RESCUE A PIGEON.

A pigeon, an ordinary one of the common garden variety, held up traffic along a busy Boston street for about a half hour, and caused an exhibition performance of the Fire Department's big hydraulic ladder.

T. G. Toomey, who is in charge of a building on the street, had been deluged all day long with telephone calls to the effect that a pigeon was imprisoned on the side of the building between the second

and third floors. Several employes had tried to reach the bird from the windows above and below, but to no avail, nor could they find any ladder long enough to reach the spot.

When 6 o'clock came the pigeon was still unrescued, and Mr. Toomey's big heart would not let him go home until the bird was free. He finally got in touch with Captain Watson of Fire Company No. 17. After the chief's permission had been obtained the motor truck was brought to the scene and the big hydraulic was raised. One of the firemen then scooted up the long ladder, which was stretched to its utmost, and extricated the pigeon. When the bird had been "landed" it was given a drink of water and then showed its gratitude by scurrying out of the watchman's hands and flying off to parts unknown.

INDIANS CLAIM CHICAGO LAKE FRONT.

The council of the Pottawatomie tribe held a powwow at the dance grounds on the reservation at Holton, Kan., recently to consult a Chicago lawyer, J. G. Grossburg, on a proposal to sue the city of Chicago for the recovery by the tribe of the lake front.

The Pottawatomie Indians, Mr. Grossburg claims, own the Chicago lake front. He asks the Indians to give him a retaining fee and a per cent. of the judgment obtained and he will sue to recover the property, or rather continue the suit he already claims to have started. Superintendent Snyder advised the Indians not to give the lawyer the retainer, but to offer him a per cent. of the judgment if he cared to prosecute the claim through the courts. The Indians acted on Mr. Snyder's advice. They had agreed to pay Mr. Grossburg's expenses from Chicago to Kansas and return, and they raised this amount and let it go at that.

The Pottawatomies owned the site on which Chicago is located a hundred years ago. They ceded this to the government, the conveyance reaching to the water's edge. An island, which has since been connected with the mainland and the accretions which have been made, including Grant Park and the vast lake front from Michigan Avenue to the water's edge, the Pottawatomies claim as their own.

It is to recover the value of this property from the city of Chicago that Mr. Grossburg proposes to bring suit.

Captain Scott says that this claim of the Indians probably has some merit, but A. E. Crane worked for years investigating the case and examining treaties and finally came to the conclusion that there was little chance for the Pottawatomies to come into possession of this valuable property.

DRIVEN OUT WEST

OR

THE BOY TENDERFOOT OF LUCKY STRIKE

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY.)

CHAPTER VII (Continued).

He took a lantern, and followed by the banker and his daughter, he plunged into the rear shaft and proceeded a dozen yards.

The cut was made through soft rock and clay, and as they went on Mr. Leland carefully examined the drift.

The vein ran breast-high in the wall and fairly bristled with the richest kind of gold ore.

After a careful examination Leland finally remarked:

"A richer claim I never saw. It ought to pan out a thousand dollars to the ton. How far does the lead run?"

"Can't tell," answered Bill. "It loses itself in the ground beyond the tunnel. It may end there or it may go on for miles."

"You certainly are candid enough."

"No use bein' otherwise, boss. Yer kin see for yerself wot a valuable property it is. Take yer time an' examine it carefully?"

Mr. Leland followed this suggestion.

His mind was disturbed with the idea that Harry had sold out to Boggs and decamped.

It struck him that the boy had not betrayed their intended treachery against Boggs else the man would have referred to it.

But he did not know what a deep rascal the outlaw was.

"I've got to deal with this villain, after all," he reflected, "so I may as well keep on friendly terms with him."

He finished examining the mine, and seeing that it would be a grand investment, he said to Boggs:

"I'll buy this claim for eight hundred thousand dollars."

"All right," replied the delighted villain. "When do I get the money?"

"You bring me the deeds to the hotel so I can have the title searched, and when I find that the property is really yours to transfer to me, I'll give you a check for the full amount."

Bill's face lengthened, for he did not expect all this red tape.

He thought he was going to get the money on the spot in exchange for a forged deed. He now began

to feel very uncomfortable, for he did not see how he could really prove his legal right to the claim.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LUCKY ESCAPE.

Carrie Leland had followed her father and the outlaw captain into the shaft, but quite by accident, in the gloom, she turned into a side tunnel and followed it a dozen yards before she discovered her error.

Failing to see the lantern light, which Boggs had been carrying, as it had vanished around a bend while she was following it, Carrie paused.

She was upon the point of turning back when she heard voices ahead.

Hurrying forward, she suddenly came to an exit into the chamber in which Harry, Dan and their guard were.

At a glance she recognized the tenderfoot and saw his plight; then she heard their guard say in threatening tones:

"Bill told me ter kill yer if yer raise an outcry or try ter escape, so yer'd better keep putty quiet. We don't want ole Leland ter know as we've got yer prisoners 'cause it might spile our plans—see?"

"I'd run chances on getting killed," retorted Harry, spiritedly, "if I thought I could get out of this fix by yelling to Mr. Leland to come in here."

"Yer'd better not try it, young feller," growled the outlaw. "We are goin' ter kill yer, anyhow. But one yell from yer will end the job sooner nor we expected ter do it. Jest keep yer trap shet tight—d'yer hear?"

"See hyer! See hyer!" interposed Dan, who was in a terrible rage.

"Well, what d'yer want?" snarled the guard.

"I want Boggs ter come yere an' fight me, yer measly coyote."

"Git out! Yer daffy. He ain't no fool ter give yer a chance ter put him out. Bill is simply goin' ter end you where yer lie."

Just then one of the gang in the next cave accidentally discharged his revolver, and the bullet hit

one of his friends in the foot and caused him to yell with pain.

Curious to see what happened, the guard ran over to the exit and peered through, leaving his two prisoners alone for a minute.

Carrie darted into the place, a small, sharp pocket-knife in her hand.

Both Harry and Dan were amazed to see her, and she made a warning gesture to enjoin silence upon them.

The next instant she began to sever their bonds, and although she was terribly excited, she did not falter.

Just as she got Harry free, the guard turned around and saw her.

He ripped out a savage exclamation and rushed forward, crying:

"Treachery! I'll lay yer out fer this!"

Up leaped Harry just as the guard was raising his rifle to let a shot drive at him, and the plucky girl rushed to Dan to liberate him.

Before the outlaw could pull the trigger Harry gave a leap that brought him in front of the man, and his fist shot forward like a pile-driver.

Bang! went the boy's knuckles against the guard's nose, and with a stifled cry he pitched over flat on his back.

The next instant Harry had him by the throat, pinned him to the ground, and began to choke the life out of him.

His activity and strength amazed the outlaw.

By the time Harry had the man helpless Dan was free, and they quickly bound and gagged the fellow and seized his weapons.

"Miss Leland, how did you get in here?" panted Harry.

She told him, and added in conclusion:

"It was a risky thing for me to do. But I could not help trying to aid you when I saw how helpless you were."

"Ther Lord bless yer," Dan chimed in. "We'd a-been killed only fer you."

"I'd better run after papa now," she exclaimed. "Can you escape?"

"Only by fighting our way through that gang in the cave."

"Then I'll return to the passage and begin to scream. They will run in to see what's the matter and you may then get away from here."

"Miss Leland, you are a good one. We'll try your plan."

The girl smiled, nodded and hurried into the passage, and Harry and Dan went over to the passage leading into the cave.

A moment later they heard the girl's wild shrieks and saw most of the gang make a wild rush for the rear passage.

"Now's our chance, Dan!" muttered the boy. "Follow me."

They dashed into the big cavern.

Only two of the gang remained, but Harry and

the scout treated them to a couple of shots from their revolvers and sent the pair running after their companions yelling for help.

"Ther hosses! Ther hosses!" gasped Dan. "Git yourn, Harry!"

"Here's the pair," laughed the boy, selecting their bronchos from among those of their enemies. "We'll have to lead them out until we get through the fall, Dan."

"Hurry! Hurry! Ther shots is a-bringin' ther gang this way," the scout replied, and they hastened away with the animals.

Just as they were going out the entrance the outlaws came tearing out of the shaft at the rear of the cave and saw them.

"The prisoners are escaping!" one of them yelled furiously.

Harry and the guide barely reached the outer air when a volley was discharged at them by the outlaws, but none struck them.

Mounting their horses, the pair dashed away.

"They won't harm Carrie or her father," exclaimed Harry, as they galloped through the pass. "It stands to reason that Leland will escape, as he is the one they expect to work for the price of the mine."

"Won't our escape make Boggs afeered of ther banker goin' back on his promise ter buy ther mine of them?" demanded Dan.

"I don't believe so," answered the young tenderfoot. "But I'm sure they'll chase us. We must get away just about as fast as we can."

They urged their bronchos along swiftly, and as they were pretty good animals, they went over the rough ground at a lively pace.

Although Harry heard the hoof-beats of their pursuers, they never came anywhere near the fugitives, and the boy and his companion soon went galloping down into Lucky Strike.

Upon reaching the hotel, they turned their horses over to the stableman and sat down on the piazza to wait for Leland and his daughter to come back.

"If they don't return within a reasonable length of time," said Harry, "I'll alarm the whole camp, get up a party of vigilants, go back to the cave and give those scoundrels a fight!"

A broad grin overspread Dan's face, and he lit his pipe and cried:

"Fer a tenderfoot, you're about ther toughest leetle proposition I ever seen. Most pilgrims from the East would keep away from them thar raskils arter goin' through such a hard time with 'em."

"You must think I haven't got much regard for the life of the brave girl who got us out of that scrape, Dan."

"Yes, yes!! I see. Kinder gone on ther leetle lassie, ain't yer, pard?"

"Well," replied Harry, his face reddening, "it isn't exactly that, but——"

(To be continued.)

TIMELY TOPICS

Resolutions requesting that all Kansas City high school girls be required to wear uniforms has been presented to the Board of Education. The resolutions, which assert that rivalry in dresses is having an unwholesome effect upon the girls, two of whom recently declined to attend school because they did not dress as well as others, were adopted first by the Civic Commission of the Council of Clubs.

Among the rubber novelties recently introduced, is a watch protector which covers the case entirely except the dial. It is designed for the use of workmen principally and for those who are compelled to move around electrical machinery and it renders the mechanism proof against damage. The clinging quality of rubber makes it almost impossible for the timepiece thus protected to slip out of the pocket.

A report has been made to the Steamboat Inspection Service that on June 2, 1916, while the motor vessel W. S., of 20 gross tons, was on its way to Mazatlan, Mexico, a whale came up under the vessel when it was about seven miles west of Geronimo Island, Mexico, and knocked a hole in the craft, which filled so rapidly that it quickly sank. The crew took to the lifeboat ten minutes after the accident, and were all rescued.

The Colt Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Company, of Hartford, Conn., expects to have completed in the near future an immense new factory structure of steel and concrete that will enlarge the capacity of the plant about one-third. At present the company has two buildings known as the East and West armories, the former 60x500 feet and four stories high. The new structure is to be of the size of the East Armory. In the new building machinery will be installed for the manufacture of rapid-fire pistols and revolvers. The company employs about 2,500 hands, and expects to employ 5,000.

The non-magnetic yacht Carnegie, operated for scientific purposes by the Carnegie Institute, arrived at San Francisco, Cal., the other week, from a cruise around the world to rectify the magnetic charts. The Carnegie sailed from New York this spring, passed through the Panama Canal, then northward to Behring Sea, sailed down to Lyttelton, New Zealand, from whence she began her most important voyage, around the South Pole. The pole was completely circled between latitudes 60 and 70 south. The vessel has now completed seventy-five per cent. of its magnetic survey of the world. San Francisco is the first American port touched since her present cruise began.

Both houses of the Danish Parliament passed the bill for a plebiscite on the sale of the Danish West Indies to the United States. It is believed the matter will be settled definitely soon. The plebiscite also will include the Faroe Islands, but not Iceland and Greenland. Premier Zahle urged immediate action on the bill, in view of the fact that the United States Senator already had approved the treaty. Admiral Peary protests against our renunciation of our possible rights in Greenland, the largest island in the world with extensive fisheries, abundance of coal and rushing torrents, having potential power sufficient if translated into electric energy to make Greenland "a power house for the United States." It might be made valuable, too, strategically as a naval base.

Major O. Smith, an officer of the Swedish army, describes in Nature a sea serpent which he saw on June 14 last in the Baltic Sea, near Stockholm. "At 2.25 P. M.," he writes, "we suddenly saw a movement of the water like the ripple of a wave less than 300 feet from us. The sea was calm and there was no boat or anything else that could cause such a movement. Looking more attentively, all of us saw very distinctly a head like that of an enormous serpent, larger than that of a man, slightly elongated, surmounting a serpentine body about seventy-five feet long. The creature was undulating, making at least ten distinct curves, and a large part of its posterior region was above the water. We watched this strange creature for more than a minute, swimming at a speed of about two knots. I have seen many dolphins and whales and I know their movements. Those of this sea serpent were very different.

An extremely novel method of attacking the teredo problem, which is a serious one to marine construction in many parts of this country, has just withstood a sixteen months' test on the pier of Long Beach, Cal. These little destroyers attach themselves to the piling or other woodwork standing in the water, at some point below the high tide mark and down to about two feet below low tide, and several days are necessary for them to effect an entrance into the fiber of the pile. The present invention takes advantage of this fact and the animal is killed by the action of a metal ring which is placed loosely around the pile after it has been driven. With the action of the water this ring automatically traverses the affected area, and the repeated blows of the ring against the pile are said to kill the teredo before it has the opportunity of entering the wood. The abrasion resulting from the movement of the ring is inconsiderable.

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Good Current News Articles

J. W. Admire, of Hiawatha, Kan., during the season just closed, got 1,540 pounds of honey from six hives of bees. His profit on the bees was close to \$300.

The United States armored cruiser Memphis, wrecked in Santo Domingo harbor recently, will be abandoned as a total loss by the Navy Department. As much as possible of the material will be salvaged and will be taken north on the U. S. S. Hancock. Naval Constructor W. G. Du Bose, U. S. N., and a representative of the Merritt-Chapman Wrecking Company, who investigated the condition of the ship, reported that her whole bottom has been crushed and her engines lifted out of position.

Finding surface water running into his well had made the water in it impure, a citizen of Brazil, Ind., started to pump his well dry. After pumping half an hour in the hot sun he gave up the job. Then he made a miniature water wheel, which he attached to the end of a trough. After he had attracted the attention of several boys who were playing in a vacant lot, he went to his work. When he returned in the evening the boys had pumped the well dry to see the wheel go round.

A New York public service company is at present considering a new type of protective glove for the use of its employees working on high tension circuits. In reality, the new glove consists of three separate gloves: the first is a cotton glove which fits closely to the hand; the second is a thin rubber glove which affords the necessary insulation from high tension currents, and the third or outer glove is of horsehide, affording mechanical protection. The three-ply glove is ventilated on the back where protection is not required. Aside from the excellent mechanical and electrical protective features of the glove, it is exceedingly flexible and does not materially hinder the dexterity of the worker.

A well-behaved, beautifully colored, five-foot Porto Rican snake, species unknown, which had smuggled his way some 5,000 miles in a bunch of bananas from his tropic home, arrived in Tacoma, Wash. Bill Hall, driver for Hammond & Company, packed a bunch of bananas to the scales. After weighing them he saw something that looked like a peculiar leaf in the top of the bunch. Bill stuck his finger down and the leaf turned into a big, red, hungry mouth. Bill let out a yell that sounded like a steamboat whistle and ran. The whole office force, armed with various weapons, advanced to the attack and the snake dropped to the floor and headed for the wharf. When surrounded he coiled and was ready for battle. Seeing his chance for escape cut off, the snake plunged his fangs into his own body, gave a final wriggle and turned over, stone dead.

Grins and Chuckles

Willie—Paw, how did the dead languages come to die? Pa—They were talked to death by the women, my son.

Newlywed—My angel, I wish you wouldn't paint. Mrs. Newlywed—Now, Jack, have you ever seen an angel that wasn't painted?

Little Johnny—I'm awfully hungry. I didn't get half enough to eat. Little Fred—What did you have for dinner? Little Johnny—Company.

"The telephone is a great convenience, isn't it?" "I should say so. You can tell a man exactly what you think of him over the wire and have plenty of time to back down if he resents it."

"Casey," said Pat, "how do yez tell th' age of a fowl?" "Oi can always tell by the teeth," said Casey. "By the teeth!" exclaimed Pat. "But a fowl has no teeth." "No," admitted Casey, "but Oi have."

The teacher asked the class to write down eleven Antarctic animals. Jimmy Jones quickly wrote down his answer, and took up his slate to the teacher's desk. This was what she read: "6 seals. 4 polar bears and 1 walrus."

A country editor wrote: "Brother, don't stop your paper just because you don't agree with the editor. The last cabbage you sent us didn't agree with us, either, but we didn't drop you from our subscription list on that account."

"Oh, Mrs. Van Hash," cried the waitress, bursting into the kitchen in great excitement. "That new boarder has gone crazy." "What's he been doing?" demanded the boarding-house mistress. "He asked for a second helping of prunes."

NOVEL SMUGGLING.

By John Sherman

For many months the members of the force had been much exercised over the extensive operations in diamond smuggling, carried on in such a successfully secret manner as to completely baffle every effort to detect the keen rascals.

"It's no use," said the chief one day as I stood in his office, "they are smarter in every way than we are, and therefore the smuggling will go on."

"Do you give them up?" I asked.

"I do," said the chief.

"Then give the case over into my hands to act with full power," said I.

"Take it and welcome," said the chief. "May goodluck attend you."

Two days later I responded to the warm invitation of an old friend, a Sandy Hook pilot, and took a run down the bay with him in his neat craft.

Outside the Narrows, while steaming along at a leisurely rate, I espied an object floating in the water, which I made out to be a dead shark.

"Slow up and let's have a look at him," I said, and then, as they decreased the speed, I dropped over the stern into the yawl that was towing behind.

This brought me close to the shark, into which I sank the iron of a boat hook, and drew the dead monster up to the side of the small craft.

I was surprised at beholding in the mouth of the shark a metallic box, attached to which was a piece of chain, consisting of about four strong links, quite rusty.

The box was about four inches wide, five inches long, and four inches deep, and of an oblong or oval shape.

The links of the chain had caught on the top and bottom teeth of the shark, or rather the top and bottom teeth of the shark had caught in the links, and by effectually closing the mouth of the monster all except an inch or two had probably led to his death.

The pilot leaned over the side and spoke to me.

"Clark, there's a mystery about this. The shark never goes to the bottom of very deep water, and had that metal box fallen from a vessel, it would have gone down clear to the bottom. Take my word for it, that box, chain and all, was torn from some sort of fastening by the shark, and that accounts for his teeth being caught so tightly."

This was interesting! I procured an axe, smashed in the teeth of the shark, and was in possession of the box.

I carried it down into the cabin; there we dissolved the solder uniting the halves forming the box, and out tumbled a fine lot of diamonds, wrapped up in the very finest sort of laces.

With the diamonds there was a note that read as follows:

"Only ordinary lot by this, the Portland, but an extra choice lot by the Norfolk."

Only this; no date, address or signature, but it was enough of an invoice for a New York detective.

"When did you last see the Portland?"

"I towed her in two weeks ago, and she left port a couple of days since."

"And the Norfolk?"

"Is not in port."

"Sure?"

"Positive," said the pilot. "I always notice her on account of her crew. A more hard-looking set I never saw. They all look like pirates to me, and, although they pay well and promptly, I always feel quite relieved when I part company with them."

"When you see her I want you to send me word at once," I said. "Spare no expense to send the news."

"Trust me," he said.

I kept quiet.

A week later I received a telegram from White-stone, L. I., saying:

"Norfolk passed the light."

That was enough for me, and in an hour I was steaming down the bay in a fast tug, with a dozen officers in the cabin, all ready for a hard tussle.

I sighted the Norfolk, and kept her in sight while the Customs House officers ran through her, and when she steamed up the North River and dropped anchor in the stream at night, I was close at hand.

With three of my men I got into the yawl and silently gained the side of the Norfolk, and while the boat was held motionless with a pair of oars, I grasped a boat hook in both hands and began to scrape the side of the vessel under the water line.

The hook soon caught, and I pulled with all my might.

It resisted my utmost efforts, but when two of my comrades grasped the shank we pulled away the obstruction with very little noise.

Up it came, and I examined it eagerly in the faint starlight.

I recognized a box, the counterpart of the one I had taken from the jaws of the dead shark outside the Narrows.

In my excitement I forgot that I had reason to be cautious, and cried:

"Eureka! We've struck the prize."

And in a moment over the sides of the craft there came several of the crew, hanging to the chains and striking at us in the darkness, cursing deeply.

"Don't let one get away," said the voice of one in authority, and some of the crew of the Norfolk dropped into the yawl, which rocked violently, and a hand-to-hand fight ensued.

I drew my revolver, fired three shots in rapid succession, and up came my tug in answer to the signal, with a calcium light flashing from her cabin.

The crew of the Norfolk leaped upon their own decks, and my men poured over the rail after them.

"Yield all," I cried. "I arrest all here in the name of the law."

"Take us," was the cry, and the hardy set of ruffians drew their weapons.

But my men were more than a match for them, and in spite of hard blows we were fast getting the better of our opponents.

One of the rascals cried:

"The game's up; fire the craft!"

A sailor rushed past me toward the companion ladder.

I understood that he was about to fire the magazine and blow up the craft, destroying all proof of their guilt, so I leaped upon him and clutched him.

He turned upon me with a knife, and was about to plunge it into my body, when the sharp report of a pistol rang out.

With a loud cry the fellow tumbled to the deck, shot through the body by one of my ever watchful comrades.

"Yield!" I cried. "We will have the craft if we fight to the last man!"

They saw the uselessness of continuing the struggle, and gave themselves up.

Agreeably to my anticipations, three divers came out to us at midnight, and were much astonished when we nabbed them and told them they were prisoners.

In the presence of my men I made them perform their work, and from the sides of the Norfolk, under the water-line fully five feet, they detached over a dozen of the metallic boxes, rivetted to the craft with bolt and chain.

These were handed over to the chief, and my hand was nearly wrung off by the delighted head of the department.

I managed to keep all quiet for a time, and when the Portland came into port, I nabbed her with all her rich booty clinging to her sides.

Many prominent merchants were implicated in the fraud, and only bought themselves off from the consequences of their complicity by the payment of very large bribes.

Thus, through the merest accident, finding a dead shark, I covered myself with glory, filled my pockets with money, and was enabled to make a successful sequel to my efforts to discover and bring to justice the participators in this novel smuggling.

THE GUN SUPREME IN BATTLE.

The naval critic, J. B. Gautreau, writing from Paris for the Naval and Military Record, says that recent events tend to show that the instantaneous destruction of the most powerful battle unit can be effected more easily by the gun than by the torpedo. As proof of this he points to the fact that the

British ship Marlborough of the Queen Elizabeth type received a torpedo hit without being disabled or disarmed; whereas some of the largest and best-protected units were seen to founder with tragic suddenness as the result of concentrated salvos by heavy guns. This striking proof of the superiority of the gun, he says, is considered in the French navy as being, so far, the most important lesson to be derived from the North Sea battle.

PRICES OF METEORITES.

Dr. George P. Merrill, writing in Science, complains of the way in which meteorites have been split up into bits for the sake of satisfying the desire of private collectors to secure fragments, however small, in order to increase the numerical strength of their collections. Thus one of the earliest known meteorites, that was found in Ensisheim, Upper Alsace, in 1492, is represented in 66 collections. The result of this practise is that exorbitant prices are asked by dealers for meteoritic material in amounts sufficient for analysis and study. "A recent catalogue of a Philadelphia dealer advertises a perfectly commonplace type of meteoric stone at \$5 a gram, the only possible excuse being that there was not much of it, and in falling it passed through the roof of a barn."

CAN'T UPSET BIPLANE.

After he had gotten well into the air over the Hempstead, L. I., Aviation Field the other afternoon, Lieutenant Richardson, U. S. N., tried as hard as he could to tip over the Martin biplane in which he was flying.

His efforts to upset the flying machine's equilibrium, which were watched by a group of persons prominent in aeronautics, were part of a test of the Wilson Stabilizer, an invention of John Wilson, cousin of the President. The stabilizer was concealed in a box about 15 inches square back of the driver's seat.

The officer showed sufficient ingenuity to cause the spectators several heart flutters, but not enough to thwart the balancing thrust of the stabilizer.

He, in the first flight made, and Sergeant Oker, designated by the government to make the official tests, carrying passengers, tipped the flying machine at every possible angle, shot it straight up and straight down and banked in daredevil fashion on the turns. Even when the aviators' hands were off the wheel the little stabilizer from its hiding-place in the box brought the aeroplane quickly back to a steady flight.

Among those who watched the tests of the stabilizer, which is believed to carry out the gyroscope principle, and tests of a wireless telephone, were Lieutenant Carbury, U. S. A.; Henry Woodhouse, Secretary of the Aero Club; Allan Hawley, President of the Army and Navy Aero Club of America, and Congressman Blakely.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

PITCHER COOMBS WEARS HARNESS.

The pitching feats of Jack Coombs during the last year have awakened the admiration of baseball fans throughout the country. The Colby veteran returned to the pitching box after an illness that would have driven nine men out of ten into retirement. Even now he works under a handicap that would rob almost any other pitcher of his effectiveness. He wears more straps and braces than a football player, yet he works along with an easy swing that is most remarkable.

BULBS EXUDE POISON GAS.

A vessel with a cargo of nothing but bulbs from Holland was recently unloaded at Hoboken. About two years ago two stevedores died as a result of unloading such a vessel. They were asphyxiated by the carbonic acid gas generated by the bulbs in the hold. That led to the building of lattice work pillars reaching from the floor of the hold to the deck, these acting as ventilators. A British doctor writing in the Lancet tells of an experience of his in trying to resuscitate two Chinamen who had gone down into the hold of a vessel laden with oranges, garlic, soy beans, sugar and cooked rice, and says the respiration of the oranges and garlic in the absence of ventilation had replaced the oxygen with carbon dioxide.

BATTLESHIP TORPEDO NETS.

Hitherto, the United States Navy has not favored the use of torpedo nets suspended from the boom and forming a crinoline, as it were, around the ship. An objection to these nets is that if they are to be effective when a ship is in motion its speed must be reduced to a few knots; for otherwise the rush of water would carry the nets well up toward the water surface, leaving the hull of the ship exposed. Used when the ship is at anchor, torpedo nets are an undoubted defense, but torpedo attack will very rarely be practicable under these conditions. The most feasible scheme is the construction of an outer false shell of steel plate which conforms to the model of the ship. The monitors built by the British were of this type, which seems to have proved an effective defense.

TELEPHONE CABLE FROM HAVANA TO KEY WEST.

Sosthenes Behn of San Juan, the new President of the Cuban Telephone Company, a \$14,500,000 corporation, has sailed for Havana to assume his duties and to push the installation of an undersea telephone cable connecting Havana and Key West, the longest submarine telephone cable in the world. Mr. Behn said before sailing

"The cable between Havana and Key West will connect the island of Cuba with every telephone in the United States. With its completion it will be possible to 'hello' from Havana to San Francisco or New York or any other city in the United States.

"It is hoped," he said, "to establish ultimately similar telephone connections between Cuba and Hayti and through Hayti and Santo Domingo to Porto Rico. Preliminary studies for the Havana-Key West cable are now being made. The cost is estimated at from one to three millions of dollars.

"The Cuban Telephone Company," he said, "has a system covering the entire island of Cuba, and has 25,000 telephones in operation. Steps will be taken at once to enlarge and extend this service. Work on the plans for the submarine line connecting Cuba and the United States will be pushed as rapidly as possible."

BROOKLYNITE HAS INVENTED A GUN.

Right on top of the severe criticism of the American army officers that turned down the Lewis gun, now one of the effective weapons on European battlefields, comes the announcement from William E. Haeussler, Jr., of Brooklyn, N. Y., that he has invented a gun for which patents have been asked.

The inventor is only twenty-one years old, but he has devoted his life to studying mechanical problems. He says his gun is the perfection of a principle so old that when the gun is demonstrated and its workmanship known inventors will chide themselves for having overlooked the idea. Foreign nations, he declares, have sent representatives to see him in his laboratory in his home. His father is a chemist.

No powder is used in the operation of the weapon, which, it is said, will fire from 200 to 3,000 shots a minute at a nominal cost. It will discharge a curtain of leaden pellets or germ carrying capsules in an arc of 90 to 150 degrees and can be operated either by electricity or a more simple mechanical device the nature of which is a secret.

The gun does not weigh more than 132 pounds. Young Haeussler said:

"There are twenty implements of war now used in Europe which the belligerents purchased from American inventors after Uncle Sam had frightened away the inventors with ridiculous offers. I am not anxious to reap a huge fortune from this gun. I am a young man and realize that the gun's acceptance by the Government might give me a name more to be desired than riches. I am very anxious that the United States Government shall have first try at the gun, and as soon as my working model is completed I shall turn it over for trial to the Government experts."

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

PAPER CONES FOR SODA FOUNTAIN USE.

Among the latest sanitary devices is a paraffined-paper cone for use either as a glass or a dish for serving soda fountain trade. The cone is made in two types: the first, intended for soda or other beverage, is narrow and deep, while the second, intended for ice cream, is shallow and of a wider angle. Convenient holders are used in conjunction with the paper cones, and in every way the paper cones are as satisfactory as the glasses and dishes which they replace. The cones are only used once, hence every customer is assured of an absolutely clean container for his order.

SENT TO NORWAY FOR BRIDE.

A thirty-year courtship culminated in the marriage of August Scotvold, employed in a Centerville, S. D., hardware store, and Miss Anna Peterson, who recently arrived in that city from Norway, the money for her passage having been provided by Scotvold in order that they might be married.

They were childhood sweethearts in Norway, their courtship having had its inception nearly a third of a century ago. Thirteen years ago Scotvold came to the United States to seek his fortune, the plan being that he would send for his sweetheart as soon as he had accumulated sufficient money for both of them.

The accumulation of the necessary money required much longer than was originally planned, and not until some time ago was Scotvold able to send his bride the money for her passage to America and have sufficient left to support them in the little home he had fitted up in anticipation of the marriage.

DOGS DESTROY A CHURCH.

Of all the things that can befall a church, nothing could be much stranger than the destruction of a little house of worship north of Hudson Bay. The Eskimos had built a church with whales' ribs for rafters and covered it with walrus hide. The little church held eighty persons; but in the time that elapsed between two services the building was set upon by a pack of famished dogs and demolished in a few hours.

The lot of an Eskimo dog is a hard one. In the first place, he has to earn his living by drawing sledges. In the next place, food is so scarce that a dog is usually hungry, often hungry enough to eat his harness, or, indeed, any bits of skin and leather he can find. To prevent this the men rub the leather cords with tar. But in order to live at all an Eskimo dog has to fight his way, says the Philadelphia North American. Whenever there is a pack of dogs together they fight. The weak are driven away and killed. The strongest and fiercest

one, who can thrash any or all of the others, is known as the king dog. He has the best place to lie, and his choice of the food. A single growl from him is like a growl from an emperor whom all are ready to obey.

INDIAN CLAIM TO RICH LAND.

A most curious land case turned up in Washington a few days ago, when it was learned that an Indian tribe was trying to secure the return of 164,000 acres of choice South Carolina land which it leased to that State ninety-nine years ago.

Lorenzo Medlin, an attorney of Rockingham, N. C., near the State line, has been in Washington for several days investigating the records in the Government Land Office in regard to the Indian claims. The treaty made with these Indians rests as a cloud on the title of 164,000 acres of the finest land in South Carolina, according to his story, and there is absolutely no record of any sort of treaty or agreement between these Indians and the Federal Government.

"When the white men first came to South Carolina," declared Mr. Medlin, "they found the tribe of Catawba Indians in possession of the land, which included the present county of Catawba and extended to the North Carolina line. There is absolutely no record of any kind to be found which proves that this tribe of Indians ever entered into treaty relations with the United States Government. The only record of any kind is to the effect that the English Crown some years before the Revolution made some sort of boundary for the Indians, which, however, did not seem to change things much.

"About a hundred years ago," Mr. Medlin says, "these Catawba Indians leased to the State of Carolina a tract of land of 164,000 acres for an annual rental. The lease was for a period of ninety-nine years, and the Indians retained only enough land for a reservation. Not long thereafter the State of South Carolina made sub-leases of the land to individuals, who took up the tracts provided by the State and developed the land into rich farms."

The situation now is that the lease is nearly up, and the Indians either want the land back or a complete settlement made by the State for it.

Mr. Medlin represents the Indians as their attorney, and has come to Washington to go to the very root of the matter by studying Indian deeds, leases, records and all documents relating to the matter in any way.

A century is a long time for people to occupy land and then be willing to get off. The present "owners" of the land naturally are quite loath to get off. The Indians may institute proceedings to force them to do so, and in case of this, an intensely interesting trial is foreseen.



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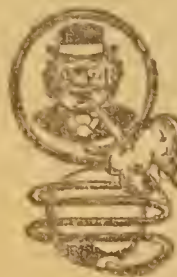


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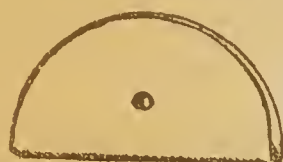
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